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# Monatshefte

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## GOETHE'S BALLADE „DER GOTT UND DIE BAJADERE“: GEHALT UND GESTALT

ERNST FEISE

*The Johns Hopkins University*

In Goethes *Maximen und Reflexionen* steht der Satz: „Die Frage: Woher hat's der Dichter? geht auch nur auf's Was; vom Wie erfährt dabei niemand etwas“ (506). Über das Was, d. h. die Quelle und das Rohmaterial der Ballade „Der Gott und die Bajadere,“ sind wir durch des Dichters eigene Angaben hinlänglich unterrichtet. Er zählt sie unter denjenigen Werken auf, deren Motive er vierzig bis fünfzig Jahre lebendig und wirksam im Innern erhalten und deren Bilder er oft in der Einbildungskraft erneuert habe, „da sie sich denn zwar immer umgestalteten, doch ohne sich zu verändern, in reinerer Form, einer entschiedeneren Darstellung entgegenreiften.“<sup>1</sup> Wenn wir diese Daten auch kaum wörtlich nehmen dürfen, so wissen wir doch, daß er Rogers und Sonnerats Reisebeschreibungen kannte<sup>2</sup> und daß Freund Knebel 1784 die letztere las, ja daß Goethe möglicherweise auf diese anspielte in einem Briefe an Frau von Stein (5. IX. 85). Aber wie und wann die letzte Kristallisierung sich in der endgültigen Form vollzog, darüber sind wir noch völlig im Dunkel. Es ist auch wahrscheinlich, daß wir durch Hegels Worte, daß wir es mit der Geschichte der büßenden Magdalene in indischer Einkleidung zu tun hätten (*Ästhetik* I, 505), mit der Interpretation auf einen falschen Weg geraten sind, auf eine Idee von Sünde und Vergebung statt einer solchen der Wiedergeburt, an der beide Personen des Gedichtes teilhaben. Schwerlich dürfen wir dem klugen und korrekten August Wilhelm Schlegel eine Anspielung auf Christiane zuschieben, wenn er an Goethe schreibt: „Mit der ‚Bajadere‘ haben Sie Ihr Geheimnis ein wenig verraten: Wir lassen es uns nicht ausreden, daß Sie der Gott Mahadöh selbst sind, der jetzt, ich weiß nicht in der Wievielten Verwandlung auf der Erde umhergeht.“<sup>3</sup> Damit meinte er doch wohl des Dichters Verwandlungskraft, der beide Schlegels in ihren Besprechungen seiner Werke wiederholt ihren Tribut gezollt haben.

Der Gott der indischen Legende prüft bei seiner sechsten Wiederkunft in Gestalt eines schönen Mannes die von ihm erwählte junge Bajadere, um zu sehen, ob sie ihm die Treue halten könne, und stellt

sich tot. Sie besteht die Probe und verlangt, mit seiner Leiche verbrannt zu werden, und so kann er sie als sein Weib mit sich ins Paradies nehmen. So der sehr einfache Vorgang in der Quelle. Bei Goethe kommt der Gott, den er Mahadöh nennt, auf die Welt herab als unsresgleichen, denn er will den Menschen nicht von göttlicher Höhe sondern als mitfühlendes Wesen beurteilen, will an Menschenfreude und -qual teilnehmen und sich selbst als Menschen behandeln lassen, um zu tieferer Erkenntnis des Erdendaseins zu gelangen.

Eine solche Wiedergeburt hat Goethe auf seiner italienischen Reise erlebt. Es ist wie ein letztes Loslösen von seiner Frühperiode, wenn er sein berühmtestes Jugendwerk, den *Werther*, neu herausgibt, wenn er sich von dem schwärmenden Propheten Lavater lossagt und unter dessen Existenz „einen großen Strich macht,“ da ihn die verstiegene und aufdringliche Proselytenmacherei seines Pilatus abstößt (An Fr. v. Stein, 21. VII. 86). Vor seiner Abreise feiert er noch seinen siebenundreißigsten Geburtstag, ist also, wenn wir die Siebenzahl als Maß menschlicher Häutung anwenden, in sein sechstes Septennat eingetreten.<sup>4</sup> Im Bewußtsein einer bedeutenden Epoche, die für ihn angebrochen ist, schreibt er aus Italien, daß er eine wahre Wiedergeburt zähle von dem Tage, da er Rom betreten habe und daß er als neuer Mensch zurückkommen werde.<sup>5</sup> Neue Augen tun sich ihm auf. In Übereinstimmung mit seinen Spinozastudien, deren Resultat er in einem kleinen Aufsatz bereits 1784-85 zusammengefaßt hatte (39, 6 ff.), sucht er nun zu schauen, das Gesehene als Teile zu verbinden und mit Hilfe genauer Begriffe zur adäquaten Erkenntnis des Ganzen fortzuschreiten, sowohl was die Natur als was die Kunst betrifft. „Meine Übung, alle Dinge, wie sie sind, zu sehen und abzulesen, meine Treue, das Auge Licht sein zu lassen, meine völlige Entäußerung von aller Prätension kommen mir einmal wieder recht zu statten und machen mich im Stillen höchst glücklich“ (IR 26, 154; 10. XI. 86). Er will nur die Augen auf tun, bescheiden sehen und erwarten, was sich ihm in der Seele bildet (An Herder, 2. — 9. XII. 86). „Das geringste Produkt der Natur,“ schreibt er an die Herzogin Luise (23. XII. 86), „hat den Kreis seiner Vollkommenheit in sich und ich darf nur Augen haben, um zu sehen, so kann ich die Verhältnisse entdecken, ich bin sicher, daß innerhalb eines kleinen Zirkels eine ganze wahre Existenz beschlossen ist.“ Das ist dasselbe, was er bei Betrachtung der Seetiere am Lido empfand: „Was ist doch ein Lebendiges für ein köstliches, herrliches Ding! wie abgemessen zu seinem Zustande, wie wahr, wie seiend!“ (IR 26, 104; 9. X. 86). So greift er schon damals dem voraus, was er in der „Metamorphose der Tiere“ 1795 in Hexameter fassen sollte:

Zweck sein selbst ist jegliches Ding, vollkommen entspringt es  
Aus dem Schoß der Natur und zeugt vollkommene Kinder,  
Alle Glieder bilden sich aus nach ew'gen Gesetzen  
Und die seltenste Form bewahrt im Geheimen das Urbild.

Auch die Menschen lernt er objektiver zu beurteilen und findet es „moralisch heilsam . . . unter einem ganz sinnlichen Volke zu . . . leben, das jeder Fremde nach dem Maßstabe beurteilt, den er mitbringt“ (IR 26, 144; 1. XI. 86). „Man muß sie nur mit dem Krämergewicht, keineswegs mit der Goldwaage wiegen“ (IR 26, 247; 17. III. 87). „Man darf nur auf der Straße wandeln und Augen haben, man sieht die un-nachahmlichsten Bilder,“ wie den Pulcinell am Molo [in Neapel] mit dem Balkon darüber, „auf dem ein artiges Mädchen ihre Reize feilbot“ (IR 26, 250; 19. III. 87).

Es ist nun Goethes Art gemäß, daß nach einjährigem Schauen und Lernen in ihm der Drang erwacht, das Gelernte in eine begrenzte und bestimmte Tätigkeit umzusetzen, und so schreibt er am 11. August 1787 an den Herzog: „Ist mir erlaubt, einen Wunsch . . . noch zum Schluß beizufügen, so wäre es: Ihre Besitztümer sogleich nach meiner Wiederkunft, sämtlich als Fremder bereisen, mit ganz frischen Augen und mit der Gewohnheit, Land und Welt zu sehen, Ihre Provinzen beurteilen zu dürfen. Ich würde mir nach meiner Art ein neues Bild machen und einen vollständigen Begriff erlangen und mich zu jeder Art von Dienst gleichsam aufs neue qualifizieren.“ – Selbst zu sehn und zu beurteilen, das ist die Rolle des Mahadöh.

Zu seinem Geburtstag erhält Goethe in Italien Herders *Gott*, das Spinozabuch, das aus den Gesprächen der beiden Freunde hervorgegangen war, und im September den dritten Teil der *Ideen*, an deren Größe er seine absprechenden Kritiker, Lavater, Jacobi und Claudius mißt. Auf Lavater besonders, der Goethe seinen *Nathanael* mit der Zueignung „An einen Nathanael, dessen Stunde noch nicht gekommen ist“ gewidmet hatte, spielt er an, wenn er sagt:

Neulich fand ich in einer leidig apostolisch-kapuzinermäßigen Deklamation des Züricher Propheten die unsinnigen Worte: „Alles was Leben hat, lebt durch etwas außer sich.“ . . . Das kann nun so ein Heidenbekehrer hinschreiben . . . Nicht die ersten, simpelsten Naturwahrheiten haben sie gefaßt, und möchten doch gar zu gern auf den Stühlen um den Thron sitzen, wo andre Leute hingehören oder keiner hingehört. . . . Wenn Lavater seine ganze Kraft anwendet, um ein Märchen wahrzumachen, wenn Jacobi sich abarbeitet, eine hohle Kinderempfindung zu vergöttern, . . . so ist offenbar, daß sie alles, was die Tiefen der Natur näher aufschließt, verabscheuen müssen.<sup>6</sup> Würde der eine ungestraft sagen: „Alles, was lebt, lebt durch etwas außer sich?“ würde der andere sich der Verwirrung der Begriffe, der Verwechslung der Worte von *Wissen* und *Glauben*, von *Überlieferung* und *Erfahrung* nicht schämen? (IR 27, 129 f. und 135; 5. u. 23. X. 87)

Schon vor Jahren hatte Goethe zu Lavater gesagt, ihn würde eine vernehmliche Stimme vom Himmel nicht überzeugen, daß das Wasser

brennt und das Feuer löscht, daß ein Weib ohne Mann gebiert und daß ein Toter aufersteht, vielmehr halte er dieses für Lästereien gegen den großen Gott und seine Offenbarung in der Natur. Ausschließliche Intoleranz hatte er Lavater vorgeworfen, weil er sich gar zu ungebärdig gegen den alten Gott und seine Kinder selbst stelle, als jener berichtete, daß er „eine sehr tolerante Predigt“ über das Thema *Eins ist not* gehalten habe.<sup>7</sup>

Eine zusammenfassende Kritik dieser zufriedenen Einfalt finden wir schon in den letzten beiden Absätzen der bereits erwähnten Spinoza-Abhandlung Goethes,<sup>8</sup> in der es heißt: Die Menschen

werden dasjenige, wie sie am bequemsten denken, worin sie einen Genuß finden können, für das Gewisseste und Sicherste halten, ja man wird meistens bemerken, daß sie andere, die sich nicht so leicht beruhigen, mit einem zufriedenen Mitleid ansehen und bei jeder Gelegenheit bescheiden trotzig merken lassen, daß sie im Wahren eine Sicherheit gefunden, welche über allen Beweis und Verstand erhaben sei. Sie können nicht genug ihre innere beneidenswerte Ruhe und Freude rühmen und diese Glückseligkeit einem jeden als das letzte Ziel andeuten. Da sie aber weder klar zu entdecken imstande sind, auf welchem Wege sie zu dieser Überzeugung gelangen, noch was eigentlich der Grund derselbigen sei, sondern bloß von der Gewißheit als Gewißheit sprechen, so bleibt auch dem Lehrbegierigen wenig Trost bei ihnen, indem er immer hören muß, das Gemüt müsse immer einfältiger und einfältiger werden, sich nur auf einen Punkt hinrichten, sich aller mannigfaltigen verwirrenden Verhältnisse entschlagen, und nur alsdann könne man aber auch um desto sicherer in einem Zustande sein Glück finden, der ein freiwilliges Geschenk und eine besondere Gabe Gottes sei.

Nun möchten wir zwar nach unserer Art zu denken diese Beschränkung keine Gabe nennen, weil ein Mangel nicht als eine Gabe angesehen werden kann, wohl aber möchten wir es als eine Gabe der Natur ansehen, daß sie, da der Mensch nur meist zu unvollständigen Begriffen zu gelangen imstande ist, sie ihn doch mit einer solchen Zufriedenheit in seiner Enge versorgt hat. (39, 8 f.)

In gleicher Weise aber paßt diese Charakterisierung der typischen Haltung solcher Beschränktheit und solcher Verachtung der Werte alles diesseitigen Lebens auf den Gedankengang und die Einzelheiten des alten Kirchenliedes *Eins ist not* von Johann Heinrich Schröder (1666 – 1699), das wir bereits als Thema einer Lavaterschen Predigt erwähnt haben. Die Seele, so mahnt dieses Lied, solle alles Kreatürliche hinter sich lassen und sich über die Natur hinausschwingen. In Jesu, wo Gott und die Menschheit in einem vereinigt seien, finde sie alle sonst verborgene himmlische Vielheit und Fülle und genieße sie in seiner Lehre. Sie komme als Geschenk und Gnade vom Heiland allein, denn als Recht-

fertigung könne der Mensch nichts als „die Kleider des Heils“ vor Gott bringen, die ihm durch den Kreuzestod Jesus' geworden seien, der ihn der Hölle entbunden habe. Daher solle er sich in Demut und Einfachheit in solche Schranken fügen und sich durch Jesus, der ihm ein und alles sei, von bösem, betrügerlichem Wege fern halten lassen. — Es gilt also hier, ohne eignes Streben und Nachdenken, mit Verachtung dessen, was um uns lebt und was doch Schöpfung unsres Schöpfers ist, eine Weisheit anzunehmen, die nicht weiter definiert wird und alle Fülle und Vielheit umfassen soll. Auf die, welche es nicht tun, „auf den größten Haufen,“ wird, wie Goethe sagt, bescheiden trotzig hinabgeblickt; und das sind solche, welche mit der größten Gabe, welche dem Menschen gegeben ist, der Vernunft, den Sinn der göttlichen Schöpfung zu ergründen suchen und den Menschen selbst in das Ganze einzuordnen trachten. Statt dessen soll er an etwas glauben, was wider seinen Verstand und alle göttliche Ordnung zu sein scheint. Auf Grund dieses Verzichtes soll er mit diesem Freischein, den seine Einfachheit garantiert, sich vor den Toren des Himmels einstellen mit der festen Zuversicht, daß diese sich vor ihm öffnen werden.

Die angeführten Zitate, die durch die achtziger Jahre reichen, bezeugen eine Grundanschauung Goethes; früh erworben und durch die Lektüre Spinozas und naturwissenschaftliche Studien zumal auch in Italien gefestigt, fallen sie in eine Zeitspanne, die über zehn Jahre zurückliegt vor der Entstehung unserer Ballade. Ehe wir indessen auf das Erlebnis der Bajadere eingehen, müssen wir noch einen Blick werfen auf ein Motiv des Gedichtes, das schon im *Egmont* anklingt. Im September 1787 schickte der Dichter das Drama den Freunden und ist gespannt auf die Reaktion; aber Herders Kritik enttäuscht ihn, da ihm „eine Nüance zwischen der Dirne und der Göttin [der Freiheit, als welche Klärchen erscheint] zu fehlen scheint.“ Goethe antwortet: „Da ich ihr Verhältnis zu Egmont so ausschließlich gehalten habe; da ich ihre Liebe mehr in den Begriff der Vollkommenheit des Geliebten, ihr Entzücken mehr in den Genuß des Unbegreiflichen, daß *dieser* Mann ihr gehört, als in die Sinnlichkeit setze; da ich sie als Heldin auftreten lasse; da sie im innigsten Gefühl der Ewigkeit der Liebe ihren Geliebten [in den Tod] nachgeht und endlich vor seiner Seele durch einen verklärten Traum verherrlicht wird, so weiß ich nicht, wo ich die Zwischennüance hinsetzen soll“ (IR 27, 152; 3. XI. 87). Angelica Kauffmann dagegen, der er Herders Kritik vorlegt, erklärt, daß alles in der Erscheinung des Mädchens als Siegesgöttin enthalten sei, „da die Erscheinung nur vorstelle, was in dem Gemüte des schlafenden Helden vorgehe, so könne er mit keinen Worten stärker ausdrücken, wie sehr er sie liebe und schätze, als es dieser Traum tue, der das lebenswürdige Geschöpf nicht zu ihm herauf, sondern über ihn hinaushebe“ (IR 27, 181). Die Beziehung zur Bajadere ist wohl ohne weiteres klar.

Weder Herder noch Frau von Stein werden freundlicher über Klärchen haben urteilen lernen durch Angelicas feine Erkenntnis. Char-

lotte hat für den neuen, „sinnlichen“ Goethe und sein Italien kein Verständnis und verschließt sich ihm; Herder, der im August nach Italien abgereist ist, erhält in Rom von seiner Frau im März des folgenden Jahres den Bericht, sie habe von der Stein selbst gehört, warum sie mit Goethe nicht mehr gut sein wolle, er habe „die junge Vulpus zu seinem Klärchen.“ Wie Herder über diese Gewissensehe denkt, können wir aus seiner Kritik des *Egmont* sowie aus seinen späteren unqualifizierbaren Worten über die beiden großen Balladen Goethes entnehmen.<sup>9</sup> Aber so häßlich auch die bösen Zungen Weimars über Christiane herzogen, sie konnten diesem frischen jungen Mädchen doch nicht nachsagen, daß sie eine Bajadere gewesen sei, noch je eine büßende Magdalene, zumal zur Zeit der Entstehung der Ballade, wo sie sich nach neunjähriger Gewissensehe als sorgende und treue Hausgenossin Goethes und gute Mutter seines Sohnes bewährt hatte. Indessen paßt der Vergleich mit der biblischen Sünderin des Lukasevangeliums (7, 37-50) auch nicht auf die Bajadere, denn der Dichter kann kaum von dieser sagen, sie habe „viel geliebt“ im gewöhnlichen Sinne von: viele Geliebte gehabt. Wenn die Schlußverse der Ballade von den reuigen Sündern sprechen, so wäre es angebrachter, diese Worte von den Priestern gesprochen zu denken, wenngleich dies eine Verquickung von christlichen und indischen Anschauungen bedeuten würde. Der Ausdruck „verlorenes Kind“ ist sicher bezeichnender für die Bajadere. Sie hat ja nicht gegen göttliche Gebote verstoßen, hat nichts zu bereuen, wenn wir für die Ballade die Motivierung der Quelle gelten lassen, nach der das Mädchen (wahrscheinlich auf Geheiß ihrer Eltern) dem religiösen Kult des Geschlechtstriebes gewidmet ist. Wozu sonst das indische Gewand, wenn sie einfach eine Prostituierte wäre? Zugegeben, Goethe hat dem europäischen Leser ein Zugeständnis gemacht durch die Lokalisierung des Hauses als am Ende der Stadt.

Der Gott Mahadöh begrüßt dieses verlorene Kind als Jungfrau und stellt sie dadurch als menschlich ebenbürtig hin. Noch kennt sie nicht das Erröten der Liebe, sondern nur ihre äußere Bemalung, aber der Gott lächelt und sieht die Echtheit ihres Herzens durch die Hülle ihrer Erniedrigung. Ihre im Dienste angelernten Künste werden in fraulicher Sorge um das Leiden des schönen Fremdlings in wahre Natur, in die Natur des ewig Weiblichen verwandelt und, dieser gehorsam, vergift sie alle jene Handgriffe, mit denen sie künstlich ein Gefühl vorzutauschen gewußt hatte, das nun in seinen Küssen erwacht. Ihr Erleben ist nicht eine Bekehrung, sondern eine Wiedergeburt, eine Wandlung von innen heraus. Von echter Liebe durchschüttert, weint sie zum erstenmal und wirft sich dem Eros zu Füßen, der ihr Wesen erkannt und befreit hat. Unter dem Schleier der Nacht, in der Unbewußtheit der Wandlung, durchläuft sie die ganze Skala der Entwicklung von jungfräulicher Ergriffenheit zu freier Sinnlichkeit und friedsammer Entspannung „unter Scherzen“ auf dem Lager mit dem schönen Mann, den sie (wie Klärchen) den Ihren nennen darf. So wird das Geschöpf endlich „Zweck sein

selbst," was sie weder in der Auffassung der indischen noch der christlichen Religion sein durfte; in beiden ist sie dem Manne untertan, denn ihr ist der Eros versagt, jene schöpferische Gabe, die auch die Liebe einschließt in den Kreis des inneren Wachstums, in dem das Individuum, die Persönlichkeit sich erweitert durch die Hereinnahme eines andern zu höherer Begattung (siehe Goethes „Selige Sehnsucht," 5, 16). Der Gott aber kann dies einst zur Sünde, d. h. zum erniedrigenden Gebrauch andrer abgerichtete „schöne Kind," so geläutert, mit sich emporheben, nachdem es auch die letzte Probe der Treue, die Bewährung im Tode bestanden, das Stirb und Werde mit dem, welchen sie ihren Gatten nennen darf. Dies wollen die Priester ihr versagen, dem Brauch gemäß, nach dem selbst die Gattin nur der Schatten ihres Mannes ist und nicht nach Wahl, sondern nach Pflicht und Gesetz dem Körper desselben in die Flammengrube folgt, als Mittel der Religion, nicht als freie Persönlichkeit.

In dem Bekenntnis zu der untrennbaren Einheit von Geist und Natur, Geist *in* der Natur, rückt Goethe ab vom Naturalismus der indischen Fabel so wie von der Naturfeindschaft des Christentums. Der Dichter gebraucht seine Symbole zu eigner Deutung, wo immer er sie findet, und gibt ihnen einen neuen Sinn, ohne sich um die Bedeutung in der Quelle kümmern zu müssen. So hoffen wir das Wie und Was der Dichtung geklärt zu haben. Es bleibt indessen noch ein Wort zu sagen über die endgültige Form.

Nach einer Inkubationszeit von über zehn Jahren tritt plötzlich Anfang Juni 1797 zusammen mit der „Braut von Korinth," in der auch eine merkwürdige Art der Wiedergeburt mit der endlichen Vereinigung von Liebenden im Feuertode stattfindet, dieses Werk ans Licht, zuerst im Tagebuche als „Ram und die Bajadere" bezeichnet. (Gräff, 275 f.) Und in welchem Metrum? In einer Strophe, die aus Schröders Choral *Eins ist not* entwickelt worden ist.<sup>10</sup> Ist es eine letzte ärgerliche Entladung von Goethes Zorn gegen Lavater und seinesgleichen und zugleich von einem schmerzlichen Gedenken an die Zeit, da das eine, was dem Dichter not tat, die Nähe der Geliebten war? Es scheint wie ein mephistophelischer Einfall; oder hat sich der innere Klang der Strophe langsam mit dem Stoff der Bajadere amalgamiert, um diese beiden gegensätzlichen Empfindungen in der Form von *Eins ist not* zu verquicken?

Eine leichte Umformung hat unterdessen stattgefunden. Bei Schröder zerfällt die erste Halbstrophe der trochäischen Vierzeiler in zwei kreuzweise klingend und stumpf gereimte, in sich abgeschlossene Ketten, innerhalb deren auch die Reihen mehr oder weniger selbständig sind, jedenfalls ohne fühlbares Enjambement. Der Rhythmus ist vorwiegend staccato, und in seiner Verletzung des Wortakzentes recht unbedingd, was sich noch verstärkt, wenn beim Gemeindegesang die Fermaten am Ende einer jeden Reihe noch hinzukommen. Das Schema beider Gedichte stellt sich folgendermaßen dar;

## Schröder

1	— x	— x	— x	— x	a
2	— x	— x	— x	—	b
3	— x	— x	— x	— x	a
4	— x	— x	— x	—	b
5	x — x	x — x	x — x	x — x	c
6	x — x	x — x	x — x	x — x	c
7	x — x	x — x	x — x	x —	d
8	x — x	x — x	x — x	x —	d

## Goethe

1	— x	— x	— x	— x	a
2	— x	— x	— x	—	b
3	— x	— x	— x	— x	a
4	— x	— x	— x	—	b
5	— x	— x	— x	— x	c
6	— x	— x	— x	—	d
7	— x	— x	— x	— x	c
8	— x	— x	— x	—	d
9	x — x	x — x	x — x	x — x	e
10	x — x	x — x	x — x	x — x	e
11	x — x	x — x	x — x	x —	d

Goethe verdoppelt den vierzeiligen trochäischen Teil zu zwei Stollen, einerseits wohl, um dem epischen Vortrag eine genügende Ausbreitung zu ermöglichen, anderseits vielleicht auch, um den Eindruck eines zu häufigen und daher leicht mechanisch wirkenden Rhythmuswechsels zu vermeiden. Wahrscheinlich aus letzterem Grunde reduziert er die zweite Schrödersche Halbstrophe von vier zu drei Reihen und strafft die Struktur des ganzen Gebildes dadurch, daß er die letzte Reihe mit dem stumpfen Reim des Trochäenteils verbindet. Auch im Rhythmus finden wir Änderungen, indem Goethe die so leicht ins Monotone verfallenden Trochäen dipodisch auflockert, was je nach Bedarf stärker oder schwächer hervortritt. Der Mittelbruch der Reihen, der bei Schröder zuweilen eintritt:

Eins ist not, ach	Herr, dies eine
Drum auch Jesu,	du alleine

ist bei Goethe regelmäßig durchgeführt:

Grüß dich, Jungfrau	Dank der Ehre!
Und wer bist du?	Bajadere

Aber der Vers kann auch jederzeit zu strafferer Bindung übergehen, sodaß die Einheit des Satzes sogar über die Grenzen der Reihe mit Enjambement in die nächste greift, wie in 38 und 58 und besonders in der letzten Strophe, wo 89, 91, 93, 95 das Accelerando der Handlung unterstreichen; doch ist der Kettenschluß (d. h. je am Ende der zweiten, vierten, sechsten und achten Reihen) überall deutlich eingehalten.

Das eigentlich Charakteristische der Strophe ist aber der kontrastie-

rende zweite Teil, den man daktylisch mit Auftakt genannt hat (wie noch Trunz in der Hamburger Ausgabe); er besteht aber unzweideutig aus dreisilbigen Füßen (nicht Takten), deren Mittelsilbe den Akzent trägt, also sogenannten Amphibrachen. Dieser eigentümliche Rhythmus mag Goethe die Schrödersche Strophe so ohrenfällig gemacht haben. Sie paßte für seine Zwecke, weil sie so modulationsfähig war und in steigendes oder fallendes Metrum übergehen konnte. Zum Beispiel hat die vierte Halbstrophe gerade vor der Wende der Handlung, also vor Mitte des Gedichtes in Strophe fünf, durch Auslassung der ersten Senkung einen außerordentlich wuchtigen, durchaus fallenden Charakter. Bei Goethe wird das ruhig Handlungsmäßige stärker den Trochäen zugewiesen, der Abgesang entwickelt die Bilder lebhafter, verstärkt das Pathetische oder gibt jeweils einen gnomischen Abschluß, wie in Strophe 7 oder 9. In der ganzen letzten Hälfte des Gedichtes bewegt sich das Staccato mehr und mehr zum Legato hinüber, aber in der achten verstärkt sich das Staccato noch einmal wie zu Trompetenstößen.

Daß das Metrum dieser zweiten Halbstrophen besonders wirksam sei, haben anscheinend bereits die Zeitgenossen empfunden. Die Zelterische Vertonung der Ballade aus dem Entstehungsjahr wechselt vom Fünfvierteltakt des Trochäenteils zum Sechsvierteltakt, und Schiller schreibt dem Komponisten anerkennend darüber: „In der Romanze, wo es natürlicherweise unmöglich ist, für jede Strophe gleichgut zu sorgen [d. h. in einem durchkomponierten Gedichte], ist der Ton sehr passend, besonders freute es mich, daß Sie die drei Schlußverse gerade so und nicht anders genommen haben. Ich wollte wetten, daß hundert andre hier den Gang recht rasch und hüpfend gemacht haben würden, weil die Versart gewissermaßen dazu verführen kann“ (7. VIII. 97). So urteilt denn auch ein Musikologe unserer Zeit, Max Friedländer: „Die Melodie, deren Beginn direkt aus dem Choral erscheint, schmiegt sich den verschiedenen Stimmungen, wie sie die Strophen des Gedichtes bieten, ohne Zwang an. Prächtig ist der geheimnisvolle Klang des zweiten Teils getroffen: das ununterbrochene vier Takte hindurch währende Verweilen auf *as*, das harmonisch von Takt zu Takt neu gewertet wird . . . und die schnell aus dem Halbdunkel ins Helle führende Kadenz zum Dur.“<sup>11</sup>

In dieser Vertonung sang Marianne von Willemer die Ballade, als Goethe auf der zweiten Rhein- und Mainreise seinen sechsundsechzigsten Geburtstag feierte, fast zwanzig Jahre nach ihrer Entstehung.

<sup>1</sup> „Bedeutende Fördernis durch ein einziges geistreiches Wort.“ 39, 49. — Zitate werden, falls nicht anders bezeichnet oder aus Briefen stammend, nach der Jubiläumsausgabe mit Band und Seite angeführt; die *Italienische Reise* wird als IR 26 oder 27, gewöhnlich mit nachgestelltem Datum zitiert.

<sup>2</sup> Abraham Roger, *Offene Thür zu dem verborgenen Heidentum*, deutsch von Christoph Arnold, Nürnberg 1666. — Pierre Sonnerat, *Reisen in Ostindien und China*, deutsch von Pezzl, Zürich 1783.

<sup>3</sup> 24. IX. 97 – Professor E. M. Butler, in ihrem Aufsatz „Pandits and Pariahs“ (*German Studies presented to Leonard Ashley Willoughby, Oxford 1952*) nimmt an, Schlegel „had the audacity to twit the author on the transparency of the disguise under which he had depicted himself“ in Bezug auf Christiane. Ihre anregende Abhandlung gibt den indisch-religiösen Hintergrund des Stoffes.

<sup>4</sup> Siehe den Registerband der Jubiläumsausgabe unter „Lebensalter“, besonders auch 24, 267 ff., den Entwurf zum Vorwort von *Dichtung und Wahrheit* III.

<sup>5</sup> IR 26, 170; 3. XII. 86; ferner auch IR 26, 169; 2. XII. 86. An Herder. 13. XII. 86, 29. XII. 86. An Herzog Ernst, 6. II. 87. „Neues Leben“ IR 26, 143; I. XI. 86. An die Mutter, „Neuer Mensch“: 4. XI. 86.

<sup>6</sup> Schon am 5. V. 86 schreibt Goethe an Jacobi: „Wenn du sagst, man könne an Gott nur glauben . . . so sage ich dir . . . ich halte viel aufs Schauen.“ Er suche das Göttliche in *herbis* und *lapidibus*, denn nur aus den *rebus singularibus* könne er es erkennen, zu deren Betrachtung niemand mehr aufmuntere als Spinoza. Spinoza beweise nicht das Dasein Gottes, das Dasein sei Gott. (9. VI. 85)

<sup>7</sup> An Lavater, 9. VIII. 82 und 29. VII. 82. Siehe: Heinrich Funck, *Goethe und Lavater* (Schr. d. G-G, Bd. 16) 1901. Goethe parodiert das Thema (S. 219) in einem Brief an Frau von Stein (25. VIII. 82): „wenn Lavater predigt Eins ist not! so fühl ich auch das Eine, daß mir not ist, dich meine Geliebte mir fehlen.“ – Die Stelle im *Nathanael* ist: „Alles Leben hat ein Prinzipium. Der Christus des Evangelium ist das Prinzipium alles unsterblichen Lebens. Ihn für Den halten, heißt an Ihn glauben. Alles in Einem sehen, und Alles leicht und schnell und ganz, wenngleich nicht entwickelt, sehen . . . wollen . . . Die Wahrheit, den Werth, die Tauglichkeit, Trefflichkeit der Sache unmittelbar empfinden und auffassen, sich der Empfindung ohne rechts oder links zu schauen, geradezu überlassen – Das heißt ich Wahrheitsliebe, Wahrheitssinn, der mit dem Sinn für Christus völlig Eins zu seyn scheint.“ (S. 20 f.)

<sup>8</sup> Diese „Philosophische Studie“ 39, 6 ff. – Aufsätze darüber GJb Bd. XII, 1891 von Suphan und Bd. XVIII, 1897 von Brass. Letzterer wirft die Frage auf, ob die oben zitierten Absätze nicht ein späterer Zusatz seien, was mir nach Syntax und Stimmlage sehr wahrscheinlich ist. In beiden passen die Absätze zu Goethes Brief an Herder vom 23. X. 87; IR 27, 135.

<sup>9</sup> H. G. Gräf, *Goethe über seine Dichtungen*, Bd. VII, 283 f. und 387.

<sup>10</sup> Die Identität der Form hat, so weit ich sehen kann, nur Elsa Sprengel (danach wohl Boucke in der Anmerkung der *Festausgabe*) erkannt (GJb 32, 184 ff.), aber sie scheint den Choral nicht auf den Inhalt geprüft zu haben, noch hat sie ihn mit dem Thema verbunden.

<sup>11</sup> *Gedichte Goethes in Kompositionen*, 2 Bde, (Schr. d. G-G, Bd. 31) 1916, II, 31.



## STIFTER'S "DER HAGESTOLZ," AN INTERPRETATION

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It is a revealing symptom of our day that so much attention has been paid to Adalbert Stifter in German scholarship of recent decades. His style, for one thing, has much to do with this. In a time when stylistic analyses have come to dominate literary studies few prose writers offer such rewarding material as Stifter. It is not that his prose is poetic, rich in undercurrents and implications. On the contrary the development of his style reveals an increasing avoidance of suggestive resonances, a tendency toward bareness and specificity. In this respect the style is a conscious and total reflection of the limitations Stifter came to impose upon his subject matter, indeed, upon his perception of the world as a moralist and an artist. In the later Stifter virtually every sentence seems to be a mechanically direct consequence of one central idea. For those who like direct demonstrations Stifter's prose offers a rich field.

More fundamental than the attraction of the style is the example of the artist as a whole, his divergent impulses, his dilemma, and his attempted solution. Both in his personal life and in his consciousness of his age Stifter offers the example of one whose uttermost powers were required to hide, indeed to controvert a sense of doom and catastrophe. Erik Lunding in his *Adalbert Stifter* (Copenhagen, 1946), has demonstrated this point, showing, for example, in what sense Stifter's "Wesensverwandtschaft mit der gedämpften, beruhigten, maßvollen Kunst deutscher Klassik" is to be understood; "... denn alle diese Kräfte," Lunding continues, "werden nur beschworen, um das existentielle Lebensproblem zu bewältigen, um alle dionysischen Gewalten zu neutralisieren" (p. 27).

The darker side of Stifter is by no means a discovery of recent times. Already in 1907 Ernst Bertram, as Nietzsche's disciple well-attuned to such questions, wrote of Stifter and a group of his Austrian contemporaries, "Sie, 'die mit ihren Augen den Abgrund sehen, an welchem die andern in blinder Vergnüglichkeit spielen' (Stifter, 'Ein Einwurf'), sie scheinen sich vergebens zu zergrübeln nach einem jenseitigen Sinn all dieser bunten Unbegreiflichkeit" (*Studien zu Adalbert Stifters Novellentechnik*, Dortmund, 1907, p. 9). Four years later Josef Nadler in his introduction to the *Hagestolz* (in the Prague edition of the works, volume three) interpreted the novelle wholly in terms of Romantic and Schopenhauerian pessimism. But in spite of these insights the image of Stifter as the portrayer and representative of idyllic, unclouded Biedermeier is by no means at an end. Eric A. Blackall's *Adalbert Stifter; A Critical Study* (Cambridge [England], 1948), the first important English book-length study, maintains this image with pious care. In a review of the work (*MLR*, 44, 429-432), H. G. Barnes demonstrates the

limitations of Blackall's approach. Blackall holds *Der Nachsommer* to be "the key to all his work, as well as to his life and thought . . . It is the full expression of a life that has struggled with unusual tenacity for the perfection of lasting satisfaction, . . . one which, by poignant experience, has come to appreciate the great unchanging values, clings to them and finds in them repose and content — a repose which is absolute because it is never subject to doubt, a content which is harmonious because it has consciously set aside all other values, which, if indulged, might bring conflict and disintegration" (p. 3). Such an assessment of the *Nachsommer* accepts at face value one of the most problematic works of the nineteenth century. Blackall presupposes a Stifter capable of making a serene choice from a few clear alternatives. He ignores the inordinate effort of will which, given the personal and cultural situation, was required to produce such a work — a work which is narrative and supposedly realistic but with the sense of spontaneous life all but obliterated, a work in which the epic technique is paradoxically put to the service of an impulse toward sculptural immobility.

This essay deals with a novelle in which some of the major themes of the *Nachsommer* appear, but in quite a different light than in the novel, with their problematic side still not smoothed out, still not accommodated to an ideal order. It is one of the most impressive of the *Studien* and provides a fine example of the depth of Stifter's imagination and of the power and vitality of style which, at his best, he could put to its service.

The first version of the *Hagestolz* appeared in the Iris almanac for 1845, and a revised and expanded version came out in the fifth volume of the *Studien* in 1850. While working on the first version Stifter wrote to his publisher Gustav Heckenast: "Der 'Hagestolz selbst' sollte ein grandios düster prächtiger Charakter werden, aber er schwoll mir über alles Maß der Iris hinaus, daß mir jetzt das Abkürzen nicht weniger Mühe machte, als früher das Concipiren. Ich freue mich nur für die Gesamtausgabe, da soll er in seiner ursprünglichen Tiefe und Gewalt auftreten können, wenn er auch einen Band füllt."<sup>1</sup> This statement must help us in recognizing Stifter's basic theme. We shall see in studying the conclusion and comparing parts of the two versions that although Stifter used the uncle less obviously as a frame in the second, he by no means abandoned the intention stated in the letter. Many interpreters have regarded the *Hagestolz* too exclusively as Victor's story, but its pessimistic undertone, its recurrent plaint over life's transience receive only a qualified answer in Victor's final triumph. The plot, indeed (except for the conclusion), deals with some few weeks in Victor's life, but the premise for his story lies half a century back, in the fateful relationship which had entangled his father, his uncle, and Ludmilla, now his foster-mother. Balancing the springtime of life at which Victor and Hanna, Ludmilla's daughter, stand is Ludmilla herself, for

whom "alles so freundlich und herbstlich . . . geworden ist" (385).<sup>2</sup> At the end of the story, in the unexpected intimacy of the uncle and the nephew, in the union of her daughter and her adoptive son, all the pains and disappointments of her youth find a marvellous compensation.

This autumnal joy that crowns Ludmilla's life anticipates what will be one of the absolute values of the *Nachsommer*. In that novel Heinrich's way to Natalie had been prefigured and prepared in the early love of Risach and Mathilde, and the failure of that first courtship finds compensation both in the union of the young couple and the mellow happiness which characterizes the relationship of the older. Yet there is this difference between the two works — Victor's happiness is achieved only after he has vanquished a specific threat, whereas Heinrich's in the *Nachsommer* comes as the fruit of successive discoveries within a benign and accessible world order. This threat for Victor is depicted as both external and internal, in the uncle and the mountains, on the one hand, and in his laming melancholy, on the other. Early in the story he is characterized as "die liebliche, die unbeschützte Jugend" (296), and we see that he has inherited a streak of weakness from his father, a hypersensitive consciousness of life's transience from his uncle — both life-robbing forces. Victor will finally be cured by confronting a radical extension of his own melancholy, his uncle's horror of death. But the early part of the story must exemplify Victor's inheritance in order to prepare his deliverance. Blackall overlooks this when he writes that "the first half of the work contains much that is irrelevant to the real subject, which does not begin to emerge until half way through the story" (p. 194). Certainly, if the story had begun with Victor's arrival at the island, as Blackall would want it, it would have had more dramatic concentration. But Stifter's epic bent serves his theme much better by affording us a detailed picture of the gradual disappearance of childhood. Konrad Steffen's interpretation grasps this feature of the work perfectly: "Die weiche Wehmut Victor's in den ersten Kapiteln dient nicht allein zur Charakterisierung eines Menschen, dem zur vollen Rundung ergänzende Fähigkeiten zuwachsen müssen, sie ist zugleich das Mittel, themagemäß in Victor und dem Leser das Gefühl für das kostbare Gut der Zeit und ihr unaufhörliches Entschwinden wachzurufen."<sup>3</sup> It is becoming apparent that the theme of the story will reveal itself through the confrontation of youth and age. Stifter will examine both, now alternately, now simultaneously in mutual reflection, and every instance will reveal varyingly successful manipulations of that "precious commodity, time."

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The first of the seven parts into which Stifter divides the novelle is entitled "Gegenbild." In the opening scene it is the group of youths themselves in their spontaneous and thoughtless relation to time and to nature which is contrasted not only to the uncle evoked at the end of this part but also to Victor as he will later emerge. In a manner her-

alding the preface to *Bunte Steine* (1852) Stifter writes of these students on their holiday excursion: "Während sie so, wie sie meinten, von dem Großen redeten, geschieht um sie her, wie sie ebenfalls meinten, nur das Kleine; es grünen weithin die Büsche, es keimt die brütende Erde und beginnt mit ihren ersten Frühlingstierchen wie mit Juwelen zu spielen . . . Dann haschen sie nach einem vorüberflatternden Schmetterlinge und finden auf dem Wege einen bunten Stein" (258-9). The boys cross the river at a dangerous place but are unaware of the danger. Ignorant of the nature of prudence and risk, they would be incapable of true courage and thus prove themselves children still. The mountains are for them simply "die Freunde die Berge, auf welchen sie heute ihre Morgenfreuden genossen hatten" (260).

There is not a detail in this description of the youths that does not serve to underline the moral judgment, nor does Stifter hesitate to make it explicit: "Wir müssen hier bemerken: welch ein rätselhaftes, unbeschreibliches, geheimnisreiches, lockendes Ding ist die Zukunft, wenn wir noch nicht in ihr sind — wie schnell und unbegriffen rauscht sie als Gegenwart davon — und wie klar, verbraucht und wesenlos liegt sie dann als Vergangenheit da! Alle diese Jünglinge stürmen schon in sie hinein, als könnten sie dieselbe gar nicht erwarten." (258-9) We are forewarned: Time is a dangerous plaything. Whoever grasps it wrongly will forego its ultimate benediction. The aging of man is revealed through his changing consciousness of the process of time, a fact which will be sufficiently demonstrated through Victor, Ludmilla, and the uncle. In this scene Victor is not yet wholly emancipated from the attitude of his companions, their presumption and carelessness, though his transgression of the moral order, his experience of time, will reveal itself as quite a different thing from theirs. It may be true that this incident contributes nothing essential to the bare plot, but Stifter's intent is to describe a fundamental epoch in terms of the organic history of a man's life. Thus every detail in the constitutive process deserves as scrupulous attention as the finished product.

We are introduced to Victor without even being told his name; it is simply a voice in the group that calls out: "Es ist nun für alle Ewigkeit ganz gewiß, daß ich nie heiraten werde" (257). How typical for Stifter to introduce an important figure in an indirect, anonymous manner. This technique is but one manifestation of his reticence and reverence in dealing with the human personality. It is as if he hesitated to use the creative power which every author commands in being able to make a human personality simply by describing a figure, classifying him, placing him in this or that situation. We get the impression that Stifter's figures arise out of an already subsistent natural order rather than that they are deposited into the world through the author's will. Similarly, Stifter hesitates to speak omnisciently of the psychological life of his characters. Most often the setting in nature will serve as its symbolic reflection. Hans Wysling has found the apt formulation:

"Stifter umgibt die Seele seiner Menschen gleichsam mit einem Hof, der sie wie eine zarte Schutzhülle umschließt. An die Stelle der zudringlichen Psychologie tritt für ihn die abstandgebietende Ehrfurcht vor dem Menschen."<sup>4</sup>

Victor's vow never to marry and his words, "Weil mich schon gar nichts mehr freut" (266), are in marked contrast to the immature chatter of the other boys on the subject of marriage. They reveal a deep-seated heaviness of heart which constitutes a mistrust and an impiety toward the natural order. Victor's path will require a rewinning of his state of grace in nature, a rewinning which will be at the same time a transcending of childhood. In the first version of the novelle Stifter makes this comment on Victor's words, "Ein frevles Wort hatte er gestern gesagt, aber er weiß es nicht; in dem Greise auf der Insel ist ihm seine Zukunft vorgebildet, aber er ahnt es nicht."<sup>5</sup> This was later omitted, perhaps as being too bald a statement of the author's intent, but the premise for it remains: A man's destiny is part of the natural order as surely as the laws governing nature. This principle, repeatedly demonstrated in the *Studien*, will be expressed in the famous passage of the preface to *Bunte Steine* as follows: "So wie es in der äußeren Natur ist, so ist es auch in der inneren, in der des menschlichen Geschlechtes . . . Wir wollen das sanfte Gesetz zu erblicken suchen, wodurch das menschliche Geschlecht geleitet ist."<sup>6</sup>

The direct cause for Victor's depression is his imminent separation from those he loves most, a separation which he feels will be forever, though indeed there is no reason why he might not expect to see Hanna and Ludmilla again. But he is in truth taking leave of his childhood and feels with unfailing intuition that what is past is never to be regained. The happiness of childhood is gone and he cannot yet conceive what forms happiness may take in the future. It is Ludmilla who enunciates the underlying principle, "Daß du jetzt fort mußt, ist nichts, und liegt in der Natur begründet; denn alle die Männer müssen von der Mutter, und müssen wirken." (269)

The parting scene between Victor and Hanna marks the last stage of Victor's emergence from childhood. It provides a fine example of Stifter's delicacy in character portrayal. All is presentiment here. Whereas in the *Nachsommer* the love scene comes at the end of Book Two after the most painstaking preparation and Natalie may say in truth, "Nun ist doch erfüllet, was sich vorbereitete," here it comes near the beginning and is only in a hidden sense a love scene. Yet love scene it unquestionably is — Victor's adolescent gruffness toward Hanna indicates as much. There is no actual declaration of love. There could not be, for Victor only now begins to realize that he could love Hanna otherwise than as a sister. Perhaps Stifter's delicacy goes so far as to prevent him from depicting a love scene between two children who have hitherto lived as brother and sister. At the same time Stifter shuns,

as has been noted above, any direct probing of the feelings and motivations of his characters. He manages to reveal the nascent attachment of Victor and Hanna — both to themselves and to the reader — in a manner which is indirect and yet forcible. They begin to talk of Rosina, a neighboring girl of twelve who has been vaguely designated as a bride for Victor: "Victor!" "Was, Hanna?" "Dachtest du schon?" "Ich dachte." "Nun?" "Nun — nun — es ist ja alles vergeblich, alles umsonst." "Bleibe ihr treu, Victor." "Ewig, ewig; aber es ist umsonst." (291-2) Nowhere does Victor express any strong feeling toward Rosina, and it is hardly credible that his impassioned "Ewig, ewig," should refer to her. In his own consciousness, of course, it does. But in a truer sense it serves to establish the mood that will culminate in his exclamation, "O liebe, liebe Hanna!" and in the vow they now make to reunite one day and live forever as brother and sister, loving each other above all else. It is Hanna who now exclaims "Ewig, ewig," and thereby seals their engagement.

The stage of weaning is past. The child leaves its mother, the playmate has begun to turn into the lover. The next step in Victor's maturation involves his confrontation of external forces, first of all in nature. He sets out on his journey to the uncle, "den großen kindischen Schmerz im Herzen und die frischen, staunenden Augen im Haupte tragend" (299).

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The pictorial quality of Stifter's descriptions has often been remarked upon. Recalling his own activities as a painter we note that the very opening scene of the *Hagestolz* betrays a painter's perspective. The green clearing which the boys ascend is seen from a particular spot and as they advance they become lost in the foliage. "Die nächsten Worte waren nicht mehr verständlich" (257), for the narrator retains his position momentarily to make a few general reflections before catching up with the group to resume the narrative. Since the landscape of our story is one of deep valleys, mountains, and passes, we must expect to find the perspectives such country affords utilized in a symbolic manner. In connection with the Hungarian pusta in *Brigitta* Benno von Wiese remarks on Brigitta's "innere Wüste."<sup>7</sup> Correspondingly in the *Hagestolz* we must fix our attention on the significance of heights and depths.

When we first see the group of boys at the beginning of the novelle they are climbing uphill, and at the end of the first section when the picture of the uncle is evoked on his island "hinter den glänzenden blauen Bergen" (262), we are again reminded that "die Jünglinge auf ihrem Berge emporgestrebt waren und ein wimmelndes Leben und dicke Freude sie umgab" (262-3). It is thoughtless youth with its "ganze unerschütterliche Zuversicht in die Welt" (258) which is shown scaling heights. Then again, it may be experienced manhood, notably the two monks who climbed the Orla. But the typical perspective of Victor

in his voyage of self-discovery is not one that looks up at heights to be conquered but rather down into depths. We first saw the valley in which Ludmilla's house lies from a height which the boys had reached in their excursion; we looked down upon it, "das still und heimlich um die Bergeswölbungen läuft" (259). Now as Victor proceeds and approaches Attmaning, the mountains which have thus far been characterized with Romantic overtones as blue, "ein gar so sanftes, fast sehn-suchtreiches Blau" (302), suddenly display varying lights and crevices. The heights and depths of these mountains far surpass those of Victor's home region. From Attmaning already he looks "gegen die Gebirgs-öffnung hinein, wo alles in blauen Lichtern flimmerte und ein schmaler Wasserstreifen wie ein Sensenblitz leuchtete" (303). This is the gulch from which the Afel pours down from the mountains. In this section we find some of Stifter's loveliest descriptive passages; at the same time the symbolic overtones are unobtrusively sounded. It becomes clear that Victor approaches a testing and a destiny. At one point he wonders why the natives speak of the Hul as "up there": "'oben' . . . während für seine Augen die Berge dort so duftschön zusammengingen, daß er den Wasserschein tief unten liegend erachtete" (304). After a long walk through the forest he comes to the Hals, where he is suddenly overwhelmed by the view down into the mountain lake; and the mountain walls, now revealing "ihre Schluchten und Spalten" (306), suggest further, unimaginable depths.

To see Victor thus fulfilling a descent into the natural world sets him apart from those comrades who in youthful self-confidence sought to conquer mountains. His is a piety that Stifter never tires of portraying, showing man passive, expectant, and then fulfilled in the cradle of nature: "Victor hatte sein Angesicht dem Abendhimmel zugewendet, es wurde von demselben sanft beleuchtet, die kühlere Luft floß durch seine Haare, und der Himmel spiegelte sich in dem trauernden Auge" (286). "Auch die hohe Schönheit des Jünglings war eine sanfte Fürbitte für ihn, wie die Wasser so um die jugendlichen Glieder spielten und um den unschuldsvollen Körper flossen" (354). Lastly there is the passage in which Victor, finished with his packing, enters the kitchen in Ludmilla's house, now filled with the noon sun and a stillness "von der die Heiden einst sagten: 'Pan schläft!'" (275). This is undoubtedly a conscious echo of the following moment in Goethe's *Novelle*: "Über die große Weite lag eine heitere Stille, wie es am Mittag zu sein pflegt, wo die alten sagten, Pan schlafe und alle Natur halte den Atem an, um ihn nicht aufzuwecken." But how revealing are the differences between the two scenes. In Stifter the countryside invades the room, "die heiße Landschaft schaut herein," and a boy who has paused momentarily goes on about the ordinary business of the day. In Goethe three figures scale a height, conquer the landscape with robust self-confidence — "Aber das Steile, Jähe scheint der Jugend zuzusagen; dies zu unternehmen, zu erstürmen, zu erobern, ist jungen Gliedern ein Genuß" <sup>8</sup> — and

enjoy their triumph for that moment when Pan sleeps. But all the while the fire which will shake these individuals out of their stillness is taking shape on the horizon. The moment of peaceful suspension reveals itself as a pause in the sequence of purposive action through which Goethe's figures can confront nature and society. How much more tentative and devious this confrontation is in Stifter's world we observe clearly enough in Victor's case.

As we have already noted, the valley in which Victor's home lies was first described as a view which the boys see in passing during their excursion. When Victor goes home the following day he takes for a time the same path he and his companions had taken the day before. Finally, however, he descends into the valley. "Als er in dem Grunde des Tales angekommen war, ging er über den ersten Steg, nur daß er heute, gleichsam wie zu einer Begrüßung, ein wenig auf die glänzenden Kiesel hinabsah, über welche das Wasser dahin rollte" (264). To approach nature in a spirit of friendly familiarity is one of the ideals of Stifter's world. We shall find, for example, the same landscape, the same objects recurring again and again in the course of a story. When Christoph comes to fetch Victor at the boat landing, they return by the same path that Victor had taken before, and objects already familiar to us are patiently listed again. On his way home Victor retraces the same path, and the list recurs once more. No reader of Stifter can fail to be struck by the frequency of the adjective *nämlich*, by the preponderance of the definite over the indefinite article. Similarly specific things hold enormous importance in Stifter's world, even things divorced from their functions deserve respectful preservation simply because of past associations. The potential chaos of the world, the endless multiplicity of objects is thus somehow mastered, even if only by obdurate will. Thus beside the quixotic hopes of youth and the bitter recollections of age, the recurrent contact with the familiar world represents for Stifter an ideal norm, but perhaps more essentially a refuge. It is intriguing to note that in the same year that the *Hagestolz* first appeared Søren Kierkegaard's little volume *Repetition* came out. A passage from this book taken out of context might well stand as the motto for our novelle: "For hope is an alluring fruit which does not satisfy, recollection is a miserable pittance which does not satisfy, but repetition is the daily bread which satisfies with benediction."<sup>9</sup>

Yet there is one area which affords no easy familiarity and which takes a place apart in the landscape of the *Hagestolz*. This is the mountains. As Victor stands on the Hals and finds himself for the first time in the zone of these gigantic forms he experiences "fast Furcht vor dieser Größe" (306). Again as he awakens after the first night at the Klaus, "erschrak er über die Pracht, die sich ihm darstellte" (329). Emil Staiger is right to say that in the *Studien* the landscape symbolizes God,<sup>10</sup> but, as in the case of the mountains, it may be a distant and incomprehensible divinity. As Victor looks out at them again that first

morning he thinks, "Welch ein Morgenlärm mochte nicht in all diesen Höhen sein, aber er war nicht zu vernehmen, weil sie zu ferne standen" (330). We are told that he is not yet familiar with the play of light in the mountains, and he notes himself how he had erred the night before in estimating the strength of the moonlight. He had also lost his sense of the polar directions, and in the morning he forgets to say his prayers. Already on the Hals Victor had been puzzled by light spots hovering over the far shore of the lake. Later we learn that these are the "Gänse," harbingers of heavy fog during which boats on the lake could be destroyed by mountain ridges below the water. All these threatening elements of nature in the mountains will reveal their fullest meaning in the uncle's "ich wäre eher ein Fels."

One element affords protection against the overpowering manifestations of nature, and that is Christianity. When the vesper rings over the Hul, the three in the boat pause for the evening prayer and the boat floats safely toward the gray cliffs of the island, even though "auf den Bergen herum war hie und da ein irrendes Licht" (309). The contrast thus established between primeval nature and Christian faith is now elaborated in the story of the Scottish monks which the old man tells Victor during the crossing. Two generations before, the monastery on the Klause, which the uncle now inhabits, had still been active; a century earlier the now legendary crossing over the frozen lake and the Orla mountain by two monks had occurred; and "in sehr alter, alter Zeit," when heathens still dominated the surrounding country, the Klause had been established, Christianity introduced, and the island fortified to guard against hostile barbarians by the Scottish monks. This story represents a segment of history preserved not for any factual interest but as the basis of the inhabitants' attitude toward their land and religion. It is rather myth than history and as such stands within the class of truths of nature. The monks Christianized the area and eventually their truth prevailed over the heathens. It was two monks who scaled the Orla, a mountain which an inexperienced youth like Victor could not expect to conquer. By means of this story the landscape now before Victor with its heathen and terrifying side reveals a means of access. The mountain motif and man's initiatory trial before this awesome natural force will recur in the *Nachsommer*. But how much weaker is the threat of these forces in the novel, how much paler the impression of the mountains there than in the *Hagestolz*, where the natural landscape has its human counterpart.

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It is in the last third of the novelle that the uncle emerges "grandios düster prächtig," as Stifter conceived him. In the uncle one of the themes is focused in sharp silhouette, the slow accretion of time, the resultant burden of the past. In Victor we have the hungry striving of youth that dissolves and sets that calcified past into motion. It is through the challenge of Victor's immaturity and weakness that the

uncle's bitterness becomes a didactic instrument. It is in the recognition of the uncle's irredeemable despair that Victor's hate and amazement are transformed into love.

The first impression we get of the uncle after Victor's arrival on the island is in connection with food: "er mag essen und sich sättigen," says Victor to the servant Christoph, "ich und mein Spitz haben unsere Brode . . . schon verzehrt" (321). When the first elaborate meal at the Klause is described we think in contrast of a meal earlier in the story, the farewell dinner for Victor at Ludmilla's house. "Man genoß die ländlichen Gerichte" (283) is the simple account of that meal. In a merciless but absolutely objective description Stifter shows the uncle tearing apart and devouring a crab. The three fat, growling dogs at the Klause and the mutual suspicion of dogs and master contrast with the ghostly-thin and loyal Spitz. The uncle, like Heinrich and Risach in the *Nachsommer*, is an active collector, with stuffed birds, firearms, even dog collars on display within the house. But the reverent spirit which prompts Risach to restore old furnishings or Heinrich's scientific curiosity are significantly absent in him. He is merely surrounded by meaningless objects, "leblose oder verdorbene Dinge," which reflect "wie ungemein hager und verfallen der Mann sei" (333).

After the uncle's first appearance it is Victor who arrests our attention again. It is through his eyes that we explore the island and through his reactions that we learn of the shifting stages of the relationship between the two. During his first night at the Klause it is only the traces of eternal nature — the lake out there being part of the same universal waters as the streams of his native valley, the stars the same that shine on his loved ones — that still Victor's spirit. But the sense of imprisonment becomes daily intensified and is climaxed on the sixth day when the uncle declares his intention of keeping Victor on the island against his will until the end of his vacation. This is the decisive break, and Victor too becomes engulfed by the isolation of that island, where, as he is later to recall, "zwei einsame Greise sitzen, der eine hier, der andere dort, und . . . keiner mit dem andern redet" (381).

Victor now begins his exploration of the island and through his immersion in the vegetal and inanimate world about him gradually overcomes his bitterness. Once he penetrates the monastery and, in the tepid air of those halls, surveys the altar stripped of its gold and silver. His senses become attuned to subtle nuances of color and sound. The shimmering of the moonlight, the pale gold of the evening sky, the feast in "Gold- und Silbergeschmeide" (338) that the sun's rays celebrate on all the heights become familiar realities. The sacred colors of which the chapel has been denuded are thus restored in nature. Finally there is the greenery about him: "Nur einen Genossen hatte Victor, der blühend war wie er, nämlich die Laubwelt, die lustig in der Verfallenheit sproßte und keimte" (356). Meanwhile, the attitude he had

adopted toward the uncle, "ihn durch Duldung auszutrotzen" (348), becomes unnecessary. It is the uncle himself who takes the first steps toward a reconciliation.

This reconciliation ranks among Stifter's subtlest and most powerful episodes. It begins with the uncle's envy of the dogs' attachment to Victor, which Victor meets by saying that love is the means whereby the beasts may be won over. The historical triumph of Christianity over paganism mentioned above is now mirrored as a stage in the history of a human relationship. One day the two are kept at table longer than usual by a storm. For the island and the two there at table it is benevolent, almost magical — "da eben ein prachtvolles Gewitter über die Grisel ging und den rauschenden Regen wie Diamantengeschosse in den See nieder sandte" (363) — though, as we learn later, it causes terrible damage on the mainland. While Victor found a measure of fulfillment, a place in the natural order by surrendering himself to the sun, the woods, the placid waters, the uncle requires a colossal natural force to tear him into that same order and release his deepest energies. That force now appears and Stifter underlines its significance in a passage that might almost have been predicted, so clearly does it round out the symbolic order already established: "Victor war im äußersten Maße betroffen. Der Greis saß gerade so, daß die Blitze in sein Antlitz leuchteten, und manchmal war es in dem dämmerigen Zimmer, als ob das Feuer durch die grauen Haare des Mannes flösse und ein rieselndes Licht über seine verwitterten Züge ginge" (364). The next transformation he undergoes seems equally inevitable, as he says to Victor, "aber du solltest doch dein Herz nicht an bebenden Weibern üben, sondern an Felsen — und ich wäre eher ein Fels als etwas anders" (366-7). He appears before Victor as a rock and gives him what Victor could not extract from nature, the power that the mountains hold, the test of strength they afford the man ready to confront them. Victor was not ready, "weil er eigentlich, der nie in dem hohen Gebirge gewesen war, nicht wußte, wie er die Schätze desselben heben soll, daß sie ihm freude- und gewinnbringend würden" (363). But his relationship with the uncle becomes symbolically a fulfillment of the confrontation with the mountains.

In this scene the uncle, far from being abstracted by his symbolic role, rises into it out of a store of elemental energy. His language suddenly bristles with images from the bestial world, violent images revealing an imagination teeming with the spectacle of ceaseless brutality in nature: "Dein Vater hätte dich mir geben sollen — aber er hat gemeint, ich sei ein Raubtier, das dich zerrisse; ich hätte dich eher zu einem Adler gemacht, der die Welt in seinen Fängen hält und sie auch, wenn es sein muß, in den Abgrund wirft. Allein er hat zuerst das Weib geliebt . . . und steckte dich, da er starb, unter die Flügel desselben, daß du fast eine Henne würdest, um Küchlein zu locken und nur zu kreischen, wenn ein Pferdehuf eins zertritt" (367). The interview closes,

however, with a botanical observation, no less characteristic of the uncle. The surface soil on the island, he says, is too dry to nourish fruit trees and flowers, and so he must constantly add humus to the flower beds. But some trees thrive there because they seek the quartz base under the soil and drive crevices into the rock to get at the moisture underneath. In these trees, we may well believe, the uncle sees his own image and the one he would like to transmit to Victor. In the uncle's effort to harden Victor, Stifter reveals, according to Lunding, his recognition of the "Gefahr des gefahrlosen Biedermeierdaseins" (op. cit., p. 54). The care for the flower beds, on the other hand, betrays the long-suppressed strain of warmth in him, of concern for the delicate and weak; and we understand how this egotistical, titanic figure could have loved Ludmilla a half century before and now seek so desperately to benefit his nephew.

Victor leaves the island soon after this talk and embarks on his career. We need not pause over the events of the next years in his life and are quite prepared when the moment finally comes for his marriage to Hanna, when we see him in full manhood. But this is not where the story ends. After a description of the marriage ceremony we learn that the uncle has not come, though warmly invited: "er saß ganz einsam auf seiner Insel; denn wie er einmal selber gesagt hatte, es war alles, alles zu spät, und was versäumt war, war nicht nachzuholen." And then follows the last paragraph with its adaptation of the parable of the sterile fig tree (Luke xiii. 6-9). In the first version the parable appears directly at the beginning, in the following form:

Der unfruchtbare Feigenbaum wird ausgerottet und ins Feuer geworfen.

Wenn aber der Gärtner mild und gütig ist, so sieht er jeden Frühling nach dem grünen Laube, und läßt es jeden Frühling grünen, bis auch die Blätter immer weniger sind, und einmal nur die dürrn Äste zu dem Himmel stehen. Dann wird der Baum weggetan und seine Stelle ist verschwunden in dem Garten. (*Urfassung*, p. 277)

Here the story ends simply with the statement, "Der Oheim war nicht dabei [at the wedding]; der Greis saß einsam und finster auf seiner Insel" (ibid., p. 375). In the final version not only is the parable put at the end, but it appears in what seems to be a mildened form, as a conditional interpretation of the foregoing: "Wenn man von dem Manne [i. e., the uncle] das Gleichnis des unfruchtbaren Feigenbaumes anwenden wollte, so dürfte man vielleicht die Worte sagen: 'Der gütige, milde und große Gärtner wirft ihn nicht in das Feuer, sondern er sieht an jedem Frühling . . .'" etc. (390). In both versions there follows a reflection on the fact that this tree leaves no progeny, no traces in time. But the last version alone has the following sentences, which conclude the story: "Wenn er aber [i. e., the uncle] auch noch andere Spuren gegründet hat, so erlöschen diese, wie jedes Irdische erlischt —

und wenn in dem Ozean der Tage endlich alles, alles untergeht, selbst das Größte und das Freudigste, so geht er eher unter, weil an ihm schon alles im Sinken begriffen ist, während er noch atmet, und während er noch lebt." This constitutes a shattering lyrical confirmation of the uncle's "alles zu spät." Stifter has hesitatingly (the conditional form of the parable, the involuted style of the last paragraph bear this out) but nonetheless clearly betrayed a moment in which the image of age loomed greater in his imagination than the image of youth, that of dissolution greater than that of natural order. The parable universalizes the theme of the novelle and is, in my opinion, more nearly a key to its meaning than the idea of bachelorhood or childlessness, which most interpreters (quite rightly, of course, in terms of Stifter's personal situation) have stressed. Stifter indicates exactly how the parable is to be interpreted. Two points must be emphasized in this conclusion. First that the uncle, unfruitful in his life's activities, is therefore the *particular* prey of passing time and extinction ("so geht er eher unter"), but by no means the exclusive prey. And secondly, that "in dem Ozean der Tage endlich alles, alles untergeht." This is not to be understood in Christian terms; the reader is given no option to look beyond to any transcendence. Werner Kohlschmidt is right in saying that "die Parabel im 'Hagestolz' . . . sei nur der *Form* nach eschatologisch."<sup>11</sup> In my view this novelle shows Stifter's wavering between pessimism and hope, despair and will to order with remarkable clarity. It is true that Victor's way symbolizes a willing descent into the depths and thereby escapes the threat of being engulfed by them. But these depths remain. Certainly there is a plane in the story in which actions have meaning, in which the splendor of things and experiences deserve preservation. On this plane lies Victor's destiny. But side by side with it exists a tragic knowledge of transience which envelops all worldly striving in a mist of futility. The plane of activity and concern for things is undoubtedly what Stifter advocates and desires. But in his artistic achievement in the *Hagestolz* the plaint over transience subsists, unextinguishable, as a parallel truth.

<sup>1</sup> Letter of July 17, 1844, in the *Sämmtliche Werke* (Prag, 1916), v. 17, p. 122. Quoted by Blackall, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> All citations to the *Hagestolz* are to the second volume of the Insel *Gesammelte Werke* [1959].

<sup>3</sup> Konrad Steffen, *Adalbert Stifter — Deutungen* (Basel & Stuttgart, 1955), p. 114.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Wysling, *Stifter und Gottbelf* (Zürich, 1953), p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Cited from *Erzählungen in der Urfassung*, ed. Max Steffl (Basel, 1952), p. 283.

<sup>6</sup> Cited from volume three of the Insel edition, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Benno von Wiese, "Brigitta," in *Die Deutsche Novelle* (Düsseldorf, 1956), pp. 196-212.

<sup>8</sup> Cited from the Hamburger Ausgabe, *Goethes Werke*, v. 6, p. 499.

<sup>9</sup> *Repetition; An Essay in Experimental Psychology*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1941), p. 5. Far from being a confirmation of Stifter's attitude, Kierkegaard's concept of repetition when understood in the framework of his religious

thought may be seen as a harsh critique of it. Kierkegaard does indeed treat of repetition as applied to earthly things, but in a comic light (the story of the trip to Berlin), as an early and deceptive stage in the religious development. At his most enlightened moment the young man who is the hero of Kierkegaard's book writes, "Is there not then a repetition? Did I not get everything doubly restored? Did I not get myself again, precisely in such a way that I must doubly feel its significance? And what is a repetition of earthly goods which are of no consequence to the spirit — what are they in comparison with such a repetition?" (p. 144) I have evoked this viewpoint to suggest the problematic nature of Stifter's preoccupation, in his later work virtual obsession, with recurrent, specific objects and places.

<sup>10</sup> Emil Staiger, *Adalbert Stifter als Dichter der Ehrfurcht* (Zürich, 1952), p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Werner Kohlschmidt, "Leben und Tod in Stifters 'Studien'," *Dichtung und Volkstum*, 36 (1935), p. 229.



## AN INTERPRETATION OF MUSIL'S NOVELLE

### "TONKA"

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Recent studies<sup>1</sup> of the work of Robert Musil have been in agreement on one significant aspect of his writings. They have pointed out his preoccupation with one particular problem of contemporary man. It is the split in the modern psyche of two faculties which originally had been a whole but had been torn apart in the course of a long development that goes back to the early Renaissance and the beginning of serious, scientific thought. Our present day predicament, Musil claims, lies in the division of mind into a rational, logical, and scientific faculty on the one hand, and an emotional, imaginative, metaphorical faculty on the other. Indeed the theoretical basis that underlies Musil's novel *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* deals precisely with that division.<sup>2</sup> Musil's suggestion of a "General Secretariat for Precision and the Spirit" that occurs in the novel is nothing but a somewhat ironical term for the fusion of the two faculties that must take place if the malaise of modern man is to be cured. In the novel Musil attempts this solution for his hero, who is to be restored by a bold and imaginative love affair with his sister, an affair that embodies precisely a unification of the two aspects of the hero's psyche.

Musil does not restrict his treatment of this theme to his great novel. His preoccupation with this problem is evident in his first work, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless*, and is to be found in every work that was to follow. The novelle "Tonka" to be interpreted here is a link in his persistent quest. In terms of its intellectual substructure it may serve as a stepping stone to the larger work. A successful interpretation can therefore open new vistas in the reading of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* in addition to enhancing the value of the difficult and somewhat unusual novelle itself.

In order to carry his point well, Musil has embodied in the two main characters of the novelle two extreme possibilities of human existence. "He," the hero, whose name we never learn, symbolizes in his anonymity either an extreme masculinity or the close tie between the literary character and Musil himself. The hero is modern man par excellence; he is a chemist, logical and scientific in his thought. Tonka however, the simple girl, symbolizes naive and unreflective femininity. The profound difference between these two people is illustrated by the hero's ability to talk, to reflect, and to write, and by Tonka's exceptional taciturnity. The tragic overtone of the novelle derives precisely from the fact that these two human beings, so totally different in their mental constitution, become completely dependent on one another. Their relationship is basically an emotional one, and in the course of

the novelle Musil will show again and again that in emotional relationships no unequivocal, no absolute truth in the scientific sense seems to be possible.

Already in the first chapter of the novelle Musil treats the difficulty of how to recreate precision in the memory of his hero. How had it really happened? Two views of the hero's first meeting with Tonka seem to wrestle with one another and to alternate. The one points towards a lyrical, almost idyllic experience with a farm girl during his military service. However with this memory that can almost be described as a wish-dream contends another one. "But had it really been that way? No, he had only made it up later on. That was already the fairy-tale; he couldn't distinguish it any more."<sup>3</sup> Another segment of his memory tells the hero that Tonka's home was adjacent to a brothel, where prostitutes were frequent guests. The struggle between these two views within the mind of the hero is expressed in the involvement of the sentences. Truth and fairy-tale, however, can hardly be kept apart. They are as closely entwined as "thorny brambles that had grown later in his head" (267). Their first meeting had in reality been a simple one on the main street of the small town in which they both lived, and he had been impressed by Tonka's beauty. Truth and precision can hardly be found in one's memory, and to disentangle them is an almost impossible task. What prevails in the mind of the hero is the "smile" of his mother with which the chapter ends. This smile, a symbol of doubt regarding Tonka's purity and innocence, he retains. Its persistence characterizes the dominant condition of the hero: doubt, unbelief, and ambiguity, aided and abetted even by nature, which had refused him proof of Tonka's innocence.

And now Musil introduces slowly the plot of the story. The hero brings Tonka into the house of his grandmother as a nurse and companion. In a series of experiences that he shares with Tonka the difference in the character of these two people is made obvious. The small, crying girl, whom the two meet, is for him a symbol of life, just as the dying grandmother is a symbol of death. The hero can think abstractly, he compares and deduces. But Tonka accepts this one individual case fully and cannot think beyond. Neither can she give him any clue to her type of thinking. No matter from how many angles the hero tries, he is in the end always stymied by the "identical opaqueness in her spirit" (268). And as a result of this experience the hero feels that profound emotion of pity for Tonka which is to become so very important for the remainder of the novelle.

Tonka's character is basically simple. She accepts the very frugal and narrow life that is her lot without complaints. "Wishes, dreams, ambition" (269) seem to be unknown to her. The necessities of life dominate her completely. Thus it is impossible for Tonka to rise to the level of the hero, but he can find his way to hers. In the evening when they sing folk songs together he understands her suddenly. She

speaks the "language of the whole" (271), probably Musil's term for Tonka's unbroken relationship with nature, that he also characterizes in the phrase "songs occur to her" (271). The two of them sing like children, and they are both secure in nature and its simplicity.

In these idyllic beginnings of their association, on their first walks, when they become aware of their growing love, one more recognition dawns upon the hero and Tonka. People without love are isolated and cut off and feel that nature consists of ugly and insignificant things that live "as divided from one another as stars in the night" (271). It is love between two human beings which breaks down their isolation and reconciles them to nature. Thus the hero recognizes the ugliness of the position of his shoe; he is aware of how insignificant his meetings with Tonka are; nevertheless he changes nothing, for "each individual aspect was ugly, and everything together was happiness" (272). And yet one more trait of this incipient, still unphysical love deserves attention. It is according to Musil deeply akin to a religious emotion. Tonka, who is embarrassed and does not know to behave, gropes for an answer, invoking the Virgin Mary. Through their love the hero and Tonka seem to be at peace with each other, with nature, and with the divine.

Even these idyllic memories, which comprise the second chapter, are, however, in the end devalued through the element of doubt and ambiguity, which dominates the mind of the hero. Because all these experiences occur to him in twofold form, "they later meant the opposite of what they meant in the beginning" (272). Tonka's simplicity, her taciturnity, only strengthens this atmosphere, for she remains basically unchanged and ever so simple.

The unexpected death of the grandmother brings the plot to a decisive juncture. For now Tonka is without protection or position. During the division of the grandmother's belongings Tonka's inability to talk again shows her utter helplessness to maintain herself. The hero is moved by pity and sympathy to the extent that he takes a position against his own family. For his people all talk, and finally "everybody got what he wanted" (274). Tonka however can neither speak nor cry; she disappears mutely in mankind. Musil asks whether "such a deed, such a person, such a snowflake falling all by itself in the midst of a summer day, [is] reality or imagination, good, valueless or evil?" (274-5). The uniqueness of Tonka, which cannot be fitted into any conceptual or moral order, moves the hero to attempt a reckless step. He decides to take care of Tonka. Yet at the same time he is making the offer, he is worried about the responsibility with which he has burdened himself. Pity has induced him to a decision which he cannot totally support. Here however another element in the background of the hero enters, that of traditional loyalty as it is alive in his family. Rather than failing Tonka, the hero persists in his decision, no matter what the outcome.

Musil has ended the third chapter with the somewhat "irresponsible"

action of the hero, and goes on in the fourth chapter to depict "responsible" people, in this case the family of the hero, in order to show the influence they have exerted by shaping his character. The hero's strong feelings of loyalty and ambition derive from his mother. It was also she who turned him fanatically into a scientist. Because of her relationship with "Uncle Hyazinth," the celebrated writer, whom the hero detests, he chooses a career that is as divergent from literature as possible. Although he is gifted in many directions, he becomes a scientist, a chemist; he has no use for questions that cannot be clearly solved. He feels himself to be a follower of that "cool, drily-phantastic . . . new spirit of engineering" (277-78); he is in favor of the destruction of the emotional life and all its manifestations, poetry, kindness, virtue, and simplicity. The hero consciously represses the emotional side of his personality and looks upon this kind of life as an ascetic preparation for the future. For only then, the hero feels, will people know how to live properly. In the meantime he wants to be "as niggardly and hard as on an expedition" (278). His affair with Tonka is therefore different in every sense from that of other people. He loves her because she does not excite him, but she restores his soul "like fresh water" (278). His relationship with Tonka is thus a naive belonging together, an unreflected reaction, something that is naturally curative like fresh water, and lacks the emotional tension which occurs normally in such situations.

There is an almost idyllic overtone in the first part of chapter five. The hero has left his native town full of ambition and activity in order to complete his training and has taken Tonka along. Tonka's essentially passive nature aids her in the role she is to play. Thus she follows the hero without caring, packs her few things and leaves home "heartless and as matter-of-fact as the wind that moves away with the sun, or the rain with the wind" (278). True enough, she accepts an insufficient salary, takes what she needs from her friend, and makes only poor excuses when he remonstrates with her. She cannot fend for herself. But on the other hand she is equally untouched by the deceptive opinions that she brings home from evening school, where her friend had sent her to improve herself. "She carried them home in her mouth, as it were, without eating them" (279). Though Tonka is helpless in her resistance to worthless things, she never wavers. She rejects with an almost astonishing certainty anything crude, ignoble, and unintellectual, yet she completely lacks the desire to move from her sphere into a higher one. "She remained like nature, pure and unhewn" (279). In these idyllic parts of his memories the hero ascribes to Tonka an almost Rousseau-like naturalness. Tonka does not strive for herself. Her happiness is to be with her friend while he works. In an allusion to Goethe, Musil describes Tonka as "Natur, die sich zum Geist ordnet" (279). In the idyllic association between Tonka and her friend at this point the concepts of nature and mind seem at one and unified.

The two live thus as friends and companions, excluding so far a sexual bond. Musil characterizes this phase of their friendship as being as nice as "eating salt and bread" (280), something entirely natural and healthy. But the hero is the man who supports Tonka, aware of his own sexual desires. And thus he theorizes at first that their love would only be perfect if sexual relations were to be part of it, because only then do "two people really open to each other" (280). Musil describes the attitude of the hero as an oscillation between emotion and theory, in which the theory seems to play an evil part. For it is his theoretical reasoning that causes the hero to arrange for a day when he is to possess Tonka, a brutal decision, but understandable because of his fear and weakness and ignorance. The inevitable takes place, but without joy. Yet this act that is to make him the master of Tonka, as he had theorized, has precisely the opposite result. He hardly comprehends "how bewitchingly, how naively-brave" (281) she takes hold of him, the simple ruse that she had thought out in order to possess him. Because of their physical relationship a much stronger bond is created; Tonka's claims on him, and his on Tonka will be immeasurably strengthened in this new setting.

The fifth chapter, again, closes with a confession regarding the inability of the hero to remember: "He did not at all remember later on how that had happened" (281), and the sixth begins immediately without any caesura: "For on the morning of one single day everything had been changed into a bramble of thorns" (282). Musil purposely omits any mention of the years during which the hero and Tonka lived happily together. Tonka has become pregnant, but the assumed day of conception falls into a period of absences and trips, and can therefore not be determined with precision. Tonka then falls ill; it is the kind of disease which is either carried by the child into the blood of the mother or derives directly from the father, but here again there is no possibility of exact determination. He cannot know whether the disease has taken the shorter or longer path: "the necessary time was not correct in both instances" (282). The scientific facts that have supported the hero thus far, and which are now to help him to decide a question of morality, fail him at this point. For according to all practical considerations he must assume, very much against his emotions, that Tonka has deceived him. The hero is healthy and he cannot get himself to believe that there could be some mystical connection between him and Tonka. And any other theoretical possibilities are practically so infinitesimal that he must reject them as a scientist.

The hero now must assume that Tonka has deceived him, if he is to act according to his previous education, experience, and scientific training. For our daily life, and science too, rest on the fact that one does not have to consider all the possibilities, because the most extreme ones do not occur in practice. The doctor, a representative of science, also rejects extreme contingencies. Rather than assume a miracle or an

extremely rare human event, he prefers to accept a human error as an explanation: "Exceptions are rare in nature" (283). The hero and the doctor and all scientists share an empiricism which excludes extreme probabilities. Tonka's problem is similar to that of virginal conception. It too has never been proved to be impossible by science. Only it has not occurred up to now, and thus one cannot even pronounce a law that states its impossibility.

In contrast to the view which insists that every problem, even the most extreme, is to be proved scientifically, stands the faith of the hero in Tonka. Musil compares this faith to the immediacy of an action, for example, the buttoning of a collar button, which also could not be done if one were to reason through all possible finger combinations. This immediacy again takes the form of the lyrical experience of a meeting with Tonka out in the country. The hero imagines fields of grain, feels the air, sees birds and the towers of the city in the distance, and fancies that he is far from all truth: "One is in a world which does not know the concept of truth" (283). This lyrical world is akin to that of faith and religion, for Tonka has now moved into the realm of profound tales, into the world of the Savior, the Virgin, and Pilate. She has become a cause that must be believed, rather than analyzed. Musil characterizes the state of mind of the hero very well by continuing the sentence that deals with Tonka as an object of faith with a remark made by her doctors regarding her medical care, and thus presents the problem of the novelle, faith and doubt, faith and science, in a nutshell.

It is this oscillation between love and doubt, between the attempt to obtain a confession from Tonka, and to take care of Tonka in spite of everything, which persists for the hero at the beginning of her pregnancy. Their situation worsens because of his financial difficulties. He even has to ask his mother for help, and in order to break her resistance he accepts the paternity of Tonka's child. But the hero shares with his mother a strong devotion to duty. Thus when the mother tries to buy off Tonka he refuses to be a party to such an attempt. Rather than to betray Tonka, he chooses for himself voluntarily a position of utmost loneliness and isolation that Musil characterizes by the metaphor of an imaginary waterfall. The hero stands beneath a cavity totally cut off from the water — thus from the world. When however Tonka wishes to accept the offer of the mother, the hero is again moved by pity and exposes himself even farther. He tells his mother voluntarily the next day that he is not the father of Tonka's child, about Tonka's sickness, and that he would rather consider himself ill and the father of the child, than to leave her. The hero thus embraces an attitude towards his mother that he cannot defend on grounds of reason alone. Again Musil expresses the inherent problem of this situation by the reaction of the mother. She smiles, "powerless because of so much delusion" (286). Yet she perceives already that she

will gain the upper hand, and her knowledge is shared by the hero. Only in this manner can the last sentence of the chapter be interpreted. For the mighty enemy that is now allied to the hero is the atmosphere of doubt and delusion into which he has fallen. A paradox on the surface, yet precisely the ambivalence of the hero's feelings.

The prevailing attitudes of the hero towards Tonka are thus two-fold: suspicion and anger on the one hand, attention and duty on the other. The hero admires Tonka's employer, who does not hesitate to throw her out because his business sense demands this action. On the other hand he fetches Tonka to all meals, fulfilling his duty. He remains loyal and close at the side of his mistress. Yet his ambivalent attitude towards Tonka is only part of a much more severe split in the life of the hero. It is again divided between his concern for Tonka and his scientific career. Strangely enough, he is successful in his scientific work. He is certain that above and beyond his thought there is something else, "courage, confidence, and a presentiment" (287), that never deceive him, a sound sense for life, that is like a star which he can follow. Musil seems to suggest that even in science one needs something akin to faith, for logical thinking alone may not be sufficient. In his scientific endeavors the hero acts accordingly. He pursues only the likeliest possibilities, and he always finds the correct solution in this manner. His behavior in his research is thus empirical, similar to that of Tonka's doctors, and in this manner success is assured. Unusual results are only obtained from a general acceptance of the normal and usual, until one discovers the new and sought-for element at one lucky stroke. This implies that extreme possibilities must be rejected outright and presupposes an attitude that is precisely the opposite of that adopted by the hero toward Tonka: "Had he wanted to examine every possible doubt as he did with Tonka, he would have never come to an end" (287). Musil suggests here that in the process of thinking some kind of limitation is absolutely necessary. This limitation is based on faith and is required both in science and in human affairs.

Wherever the hero believes, he is successful. Yet he cannot extend this attitude to Tonka. To illuminate the confusion in the hero's mind, Musil shows other areas of his thinking where he also breaks down. Thus the hero begins to gamble in a lottery, in other words, to expose himself to the most unlikely possibilities of chance. Since the hero is a scientist, he should be aware of the very limited chances of such an action; yet he ascribes precisely symbolic value to a winning ticket. Even if he were to win a small sum, then this would have been proof "that the attempt to regain contact with life was well received in unknown regions" (288). But he does not win, and his lack of success only causes him to feel surrounded by evil forces and enmity.

The mind of the hero is thus split. In science he has faith, but in life he grows superstitious. He extends this almost schizophrenic behavior to all manifestations of life, for example the wearing of the one

preferred ring and the growing of a beard, because he believes that both will bring him luck. Yet his beard is symbolic in a further sense. Though the beard distorts his appearance, it is somewhat like Tonka: "the more ugly, the more anxiously protected" (288). Musil seems to suggest that the strength of the tie between the hero and Tonka lies precisely in the feeling of disappointment which it provokes. "Perhaps his feeling for her became the more tender, the more deeply it was disappointed, for it was subjectively such a good beard, because it was objectively so ugly" (288). The hero's disappointment in Tonka may be unconsciously desired by him. For in its turn it generates the feeling of pity and duty that has from the very beginning been the driving force in the affair. Yet one more point should be made here. Even though the hero is outwardly far removed from the position of the responsible people in chapter four, of his parents and Hyazinth, he shares with them a common predicament: an ignorance of the true basis of feelings and a reluctance to really get to know them. And thus the hero likes his beard because "it disguised and hid everything" (289).

The ninth chapter, with its change of moods within the hero, is then characteristic of the objective form of his emotions during that time. In spite of his strong feelings of duty and pity he cannot help assailing Tonka with deceptively harmless questions, but even at such moments he is himself a victim: "More often, however, it seized him" (289). The intensity and tragic tone of the novelle, however, are heightened again by the taciturnity of Tonka, who refuses to talk under any circumstances. She can only tell him to send her away, "a most true reply" (289) from her point of view, for she can only defend herself with her personality and not with words. The particular dilemma of the hero and the increase in tension are symbolized by the growth of his solicitude for Tonka. He accompanies her on all errands because he is afraid to leave her alone. Yet any chance meeting with a man may cause him to believe "it was this one" (289), an emotion equal in strength to that engendered by Tonka's innocent face. The truth regarding the past, however, cannot be ferreted out in the present. Musil compares the appearances of the men whom the hero suspects to dirty, tied-up parcels being thrown into one's memory. They do contain the truth somehow, but when untied they are nothing but "a dust pile of torturing helplessness" (289). The truth of emotional relationships is to be found in the present only.

The hero has no chance to establish any verbal communication with Tonka. Her moving humility however in turn increases the atmosphere of ambiguity and doubt. The hero begins to see in the simple manner in which she has come to him either a possible indifference, or a sureness of her heart. Her devotion to him could be either sluggishness or caused by true love. "If she was attached like a dog, she might follow any master like a dog" (289). Because of Tonka's silence, her opacity, each of her actions can be looked upon in two ways. Neither

would it have helped if the hero had re-experienced everything. Again Musil stresses the importance of the present for any emotional relationship, and in this context he makes a very far-reaching and general statement regarding human emotions: "Suspect a person, and the clearest signs of loyalty will turn positively into signs of disloyalty; trust her, and palpable proofs of disloyalty become signs of a misunderstood loyalty, crying like a child that has been locked out by grownups" (290). The single action of a person, Musil claims, has no meaning at all. It is to be judged by the emotion that prevails at the time. "Nothing was to be explained by itself, one thing depended on the other, one had to trust the whole or distrust it, love it, or consider it deception" (290). In the case of Tonka, then, it only depended on the hero to say what she was, and had he been able to do justice to her, he would have considered her under the fairy-tale context that his faith in her would demand.

It is significant that Musil introduces a new element at this juncture. The hero attempts to find relief from the gnawing atmosphere of doubt by writing. In letters that he composes to his mother and yet does not send off, he is able to give expression to Tonka's beauty and uniqueness. Tonka's physical beauty is somehow compared to other impressions of beauty from the life of the hero, that altogether cannot be related to science. It seems as if Musil wanted to suggest that the uniqueness of Tonka which refuses to be analyzed by any conceptual order is somehow capable of being expressed in writing. Though he does not clearly formulate this, Musil seems to imply that the problem of ambiguity can be overcome in this manner. Yet even this possible relief for the hero is already devalued by his inability to send the letters off, that is, to voice his emotions in an objective atmosphere.

Once more Musil treats his thesis about the impossibility of an emotional objectivity in the tenth chapter. This time it is an example from the memory of the hero, a nightly trip together with his mother and Hyazinth. In the darkness he seems to see his mother leaning on Hyazinth. His painful emotion moreover makes precise observation next to impossible. Yet the hero believes that he has seen the incident happen. "So great was the torment caused by his inexact view, or so inexact the view through the torment in the darkness" (291). Our emotions, Musil suggests, influence even our sense perceptions, we really see what we want to see. At the same time, we know so little about the feelings of other people. The hero, for example, recalls how surprised he was when he noticed Hyazinth's genuine concern over his mother's illness on another occasion. The true causes of human behaviour, Musil implies, are hardly ever conscious and can be known only with difficulty. And that applies to one's own person as well as to strangers.

Thus if there is no possibility of objectivity in human affairs, if everybody depends on the emotions that are effective only in the present, how is it possible to live without faith? How does the hero con-

tinue in his state of doubt and suspicion? Filled with jealousy, he sits in his room and looks at things. But they appear to him "slanting, bent over, almost falling in their uprightness, . . . infinitely senseless" (291). The unity of the world and the hero has fallen apart. Musil returns to the theme that he had already briefly stated in the second chapter, namely that the unity of the world and of things and humans rests on faith. Otherwise the world disintegrates into senseless details "which live as sadly divided from one another as the stars at night" (291). By introducing the very same metaphor which he had already employed in the second chapter, Musil establishes the connection more securely. In his present state the hero has lost the unity of perception that is the basis for any normal view of the world. When he looks out of the window, he sees the world of a cabman waiting downstairs slide into the world of a clerk passing by. What arises is a fearful muddle, something cut up, a mix-up of sorts. Nevertheless, within them some centers of self-satisfaction and self-confidence remain, and in this manner people do find their way about. The hero, however, has lost his normal perception, and all his faculties suffer in this process. "Desire, knowledge, feeling are entangled like a skein, one only notices it if one loses the end of the thread" (293-4). Musil rejects a division of the human personality into psychological functions. In doing so he repudiates objectivity in psychological matters and enhances faith. Just as the belief of the hero in Tonka could restore him to the world and restore all his faculties at the same time.

The hero is well aware that he must either marry Tonka or leave her altogether, if he is to escape his predicament. Yet he cannot act in either direction. As time has gone by, the problem seems to have dwindled in acuity and does not have for him that profound seriousness which it should have. And so he merely continues without being able to make up his mind.

Once again at the beginning of the eleventh chapter Musil contrasts the scientific career of the hero with his emotional difficulties. In science he has faith and courage, and there the possibility of success amounts to ninety-nine percent; the missing fraction is bound to be furnished by his favorable disposition. But in his life, doubt and indecision prevail. What now happens to the hero reminds us of a similar situation of Ulrich, the hero of *The Man without Qualities*, of whom Musil remarks at one point: "he began to sink into reverie instead of making up his mind."<sup>4</sup> A similar experience is now shared by the hero. As soon as he stops working and begins to think of Tonka he has visions of figures within his mind, alternating with one another without ever revealing their meaning. They are all of those men whom he had ever connected with Tonka "and all those who were connected with a certainty" (292). Thus they are an outgrowth of his emotional life rather than of reality; they appear sometimes as two and even more in one person, i. e., as composites created by his emotions. The experiences

of the hero are similar to what Musil has called the "other situation" in *The Man without Qualities*. Events become as transparent as the clearest air, and achieve a freedom and emptiness "beneath whose immobile dome the accidents of the world occurred on a minute scale" (292). This mystical state arises from indecision, inactivity, and dammed-up emotions, and is akin to dreams, to which the hero becomes more and more subject.

Such real dreams lie on a lower level; they are like low, colorful rooms, a simpler world into which the hero can escape. They seem to be a kind of wish fulfillment, for in them he sees Tonka in such situations as he would have liked her to be in, for example, being scolded for not crying at the funeral of the hero's grandmother. Or someone confesses to being the father of Tonka's child, and for the first time she does not deny it. However, the surroundings in which his dream takes place have lost all indications of reality. Thus the carpets that had originally been red become green; the stars on the wall had been blue and assume a yellow color, and the plants change from green to red. This reversibility of colors is surely an indication of the unreality of his dream. Yet the hero escapes into their unreality as into a simple kind of happiness. He realizes that they are somehow connected with his cowardice and lack of faith, which prevent him from coming to a decision in real life.

The hero, too, is aware of the essential difference between his dreams and the mystical state of half-awakeness. Because in his dreams he can relax; they do not have the unbearable kind of tension of the former. Musil suggests that the hero experiences in his dreams the emotion of love by itself, which is not bound to Tonka any longer. Tonka, for example, appears "as great as love" (293) and not as the little shop girl that she really was. Sometime she loses her identity altogether and appears as her own younger sister, who had never really existed, or merely as a rustling of skirts. Thus the dream reveals the inclination of the hero towards the feminine in its essence, which is not yet tied to Tonka. This transferable and independent character of the basic emotion of love, Musil implies, must also be felt in the waking state. He stipulates that *not the beloved is the origin of the emotion* of love, but the emotion exists prior to her and is only put behind her "like a light" (293).<sup>5</sup> The emotion is primary, the object secondary. There exists, Musil claims, a slight difference between dream and waking state in this respect, for in the dream a very slight chink still separates the beloved from the emotion. In the waking state the emotion and the beloved are congruent. It is the particular misfortune of the hero that he is not able "to put the light behind Tonka," i. e., to unite the emotion and the beloved.

This act of uniting the love object and the emotion, the authentic act of love, is an act of faith. Musil stresses this by referring to the prevalence of horses in the memory of the hero at this time. Horses

remind him of his childhood, and it is a naive, childlike quality, trust and magnanimity, which the hero has lost. Moreover, horses have religious significance for him. They remind him of the old-fashioned coachmen who always lifted their hats before wayside crosses. Only he himself, though still a child, did not want to do that any longer, "for he was already clever and did not believe" (294). The horses are thus connected with an act of faith which the hero was unable to perform even in his childhood. And to make his intention even more clear Musil introduces one more reference to the same problem. The hero recalls that while watching horses and coachmen on a cold winter day he was unable to button his jacket with his stiff fingers. We remember that in chapter six Musil had already used a similar metaphor concerning the immediacy of a belief in Tonka's innocence. By reintroducing the same metaphor as an example of the necessity of faith, Musil combines the strands of past and present, and moreover anchors the problem of the hero in the religious sphere where it properly belongs.

Even in the final chapters, the basic problems of the hero do not find a solution. Though his strong feelings have abated, the hero is never able to formulate his faith in Tonka and to pronounce it. The imminence of her death cannot change him, and only afterwards does the hero gain a more positive evaluation of the total experience. "Then it occurred to him, incidentally like a poem, . . . that it wasn't Tonka with whom he had lived, but something had called him" (299). Some intimation of the divine had come into the life of the hero that was to change him forever. We can now see the whole novelle as an educational experience of the hero. He has finished his invention, he is ready for life, but he has also been changed into a better man. Even though his awareness of all this might only last a second, it is the kind that is inescapable. And with this Musil releases hero and reader.

In conclusion we must ask ourselves what precisely the main points are that Musil develops in the novelle. Surely the overriding issue seems to be the realization that scientific objectivity is not applicable and not attainable in human affairs. The hero, who has consciously banned emotions and faith from his life in favor of his scientific career, must learn to recognize their importance, and does this only after the tragic outcome of the plot. Human affairs are decided and judged by our emotions, which cannot last and must be renewed and recharged at each moment. Musil seems to suggest that emotions decide our total attitude towards another human being. One could compare Musil's statement to a colorful spotlight which turns a stage into a definite color, and now every single detail on this stage is determined by it.

A number of conclusions follow, then, from this recognition of an enhanced role of the emotions. We have already stated that in human affairs any kind of objectivity of an action seems very difficult to achieve. And since there can be no objectivity, there can also not be an objective judgment of moral and immoral acts. There cannot be

any general standards, no laws, no morality, but only something that one can best denote as "faith," something that transcends our rational and scientific minds and originates in our emotional life. A corollary to this is a new appreciation of the present and a devaluation of the past. Only in the present are emotions at work, only then do they give us a true indication of our proper state of "faith," which is in itself also the state of being attuned to the world.

Such a new, strengthened role of the emotions, however, requires also a new appreciation of the logical and scientific faculties in man. And here we are able to establish a connection between "Tonka" and *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. On a very simple level, it is quite obvious that some of the qualities of the hero of "Tonka" reappear in Ulrich, the hero of the novel. He, too, is a scientific man, he too has suppressed an emotional part of his personality. But while in "Tonka" Musil merely wants to show the fatal results of the split between the two faculties, in the *Mann ohne Eigenschaften* Musil is bent on creating a synthesis. In his suggestions of the "General Secretariat" and "the other situation," Musil attempts the solution of the problem which the shorter work had suggested to him. In this manner we can observe the link between the two works and derive insight regarding their common interpretation.

<sup>1</sup> Gerhart Baumann, "Robert Musil," eine Vorstudie, *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* XXXIV (1953), p. 292-315, particularly p. 304 ff. — Walter Jens, *Statt einer Literaturgeschichte*, (Pfullingen, 1957), p. 59-85, particularly p. 66 ff. — Paul Requadt, "Zu Musil's Portugiesin," *Wirkendes Wort* V (1954-55), p. 152-8.

<sup>2</sup> See my previous papers: "Musil's Erdensekretariat der Genauigkeit und Seele," *Monatshefte* XLVI (1954), pp. 305-316, and "Musil's Siamese Twins," *Germanic Review* XXXIII (1958), pp. 41-52.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Musil, *Prosa, Dramen, Späte Briefe*, *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, Vol. II, (Hamburg, 1957) p. 265. Page references in brackets refer to this edition. The translation is my own.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, translated by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York, 1953), I, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> See my previous paper, "Musil's Siamese Twins," *Germanic Review* XXXIII (1958), pp. 41-52, particularly p. 46.



## BOOK REVIEWS

### Das Hildebrandslied.

*In der langobardischen Urfassung hergestellt von Willy Krogmann. Philologische Studien und Quellen. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1959. 106 pages. DM 9.80.*

Professor Krogmann has undertaken in this book to reproduce in the Langobard language a version of the *Hildebrandslied* which he regards as the original form of the poem from which the Old High German version was derived by a Bavarian translator.

The arguments for this Langobardic text are linguistic and stylistic, the method is comparative. The number of minute points made and debated is too large to permit discussion in a review for the *Monatshefte*. Many of them are very interesting. For instance: the proposal that *se* in the phrase: *garutun se iro gudhamun* is the Langobardic dative of the reflexive pronoun makes one wonder about the form *se* in Psalm 138, line 24, or even about the one in the *Bamberger Blutsegen*, line 2: *unte uordûhta se uorna*.

For twenty-five years I have been telling students that I should like to take this *se* (with Boer) as the equivalent of Gothic *sis*, Old Norse *ser*, but that I could not do so because precisely in the cognates of such forms as Gothic *weis*, *mis*, *pus*, *jus* High German kept the final consonant as *-r*, *wir*, *mir*, *dir*, *ir*. Now comes Krogmann and says that Langobardic did not keep this final consonant, but behaved like Old English and Old Saxon, and that the Old High German translator misunderstood the form. However, his only evidence on this point is put this way (p. 41): "Den Schwund von *z* in unbetonter Stellung bezeugt das im Hildebrandslied belegte *se* 'sich'." This may be true, but the reasoning is not compelling, and the disparity involved in a dialect which like Gothic and Norse kept the dative of the reflexive, while like English and Saxon it lost a final *-z* is not mentioned.

Likewise, Krogmann explains the *se* of the phrase: *so imo se der chuning gap* as the masculine demonstrative pronoun = Gothic *sa*, OE, OS *se*, again misunderstood by the OHG translator. This is ingenious, but no supporting evidence to show that Langobardic had this demonstrative form is available. If it did have the form, the question of the relationship of Langobardic to Old English and Old Saxon on the one hand and to Old High German on the other needs further examination.

Also, it is just possible that OHG lexicography is not yet adequate to support some of the statements made. For example, in discussing *herero* and *heremo*, Krogmann says (p. 15): "Im althochdeutschen und altsächsischen Sprachgebrauch wird *hér* nur noch im übertragenen Sinne als 'hehr, erhaben, vornehm, herrlich' gebraucht. In der Benediktinerregel wird *senior* zwar einmal durch *heriro* übersetzt, doch hat

bereits Kögel darauf hingewiesen, daß lat. *senior* hier in dem nicht seltenen Sinne von *prior* verstanden worden ist." None of the evidence I have can be used to refute this interpretation of *heriro* = *senior*. But it may be worth while to set the record straight. Forms of the comparative and superlative of *hēr* translate forms of *senior* not once but in nine passages of the Benediktinerregel. They translate forms of *prior* in five other passages, and at one spot (273.16) *berorin* translates *altiori*. Page and line numbers from Steinmeyer are: = *senior* 274 10; 205 17; 231 22; 253 14; 264 11; 255 28; 262 17; 203 27; 206 6: = *prior* 244 8; 244 11; 274 6; 209 10; 214 21; 273 27; 246 12;

The chief critical tool and the basic metrical key to the reconstruction of this text is the so-called *Hakenreim*. The essential feature of this is that lines belonging together are linked by the alliteration of the fourth or last stave of one line with the first three staves of the following line. This form of verse structure is clearly very clever and fastidious. Krogmann thinks it was developed by the Goths and passed on by them to the Langobards. It seems to me more probable that the poem itself, as well as the form, may have the same history.

This theory of stave rime suggests or requires the translation of words actually found in the OHG Ms. into words reconstructed for Langobardic which can be fitted into this metrical pattern. The fact that this has been accomplished is impressive. What might be done with Gothic or some other dialect is interesting.

One of the prerequisites for writing Langobardic is the reconstruction of the Langobardic sound system and the establishment of the relationships between Langobardic sounds and General Germanic sounds. Krogmann's analysis and statement of this problem is careful and thorough. His materials are considerably less than those in Bruckner [QF 75]. Specifically, he uses 137 Langobardic forms, of which 35 are names. The only forms he cites which are not in Bruckner are two names and *unman*, *unan* = *Gunst*, from the *Runenfibel* of Paltersdorf A & B. If my counting is correct, Bruckner lists 207 Appellativa, 2,326 *Personennamen*, and :93 *Ortsnamen*.

In Krogmann's reconstructed Langobardic text I count 319 words. Seventy of these are directly derivable from known Langobardic words in Bruckner, 22 being appellatives, the rest from proper names. Directly from the OHG text, with modification to make them fit the assumed Langobardic patterns are an additional 153 words. This leaves something like 96 words which the author has conjectured, largely on the basis of Old English and Old Norse forms. A great many of these conjectures are obviously possible and need no discussion. Of the others I find none which seems to be impossible. Whether or not a resurrected Langobard would recognize any of this text is of very little importance. What matters is that the method by which this text was arrived at is defensible, point by point. No one will ever know whether it represents the fact or not, but it is a sensible explanation of the textual problems of the OHG version. It leaves a good deal of explaining to do in the strictly linguistic area of *Wortgeographie* and dialect relationships, but

that need not bar the acceptance of this text at a very reasonable solution of the literary problems.

As a sample of the procedure we may observe what happens to the OHG text: *Ik gihorta dat seggen dat sih urbettun ænon muotin Hiltibrant eni Hadubrant untar heriun twem*. The *b*-alliteration of Hiltibrant-Hadubrant-heriun is clear. From this it is inferred that the last stave of the preceding line must have *b*-alliteration. *urbettun-ænon* is a vowel alliteration. They constitute the nucleus of the wanted line. Hence a new form with vowel alliteration is required for the first stave to replace *ik gihorta dat seggen*. Krogmann's answer is *Gaaiskoda* = OE *geahsod*, OHG *gieiskon*. The required *b*-alliterating form is found by substituting *bizjan* = OE *bittan* for *muotin*. Hence we read, Langobardic:

Gaaiskoda urhaizjon      se ainon hizjan  
Hildibrant and Hadubrant      harjo in swaime

All this is carefully supported in the commentary by analogues from Old English, Old Norse, and Old Saxon poetry. The argument is logical and the similarities cannot be denied. Possibly the forms in the Old English *Judith*, *Daniel*, *Phoenix*, as well as the *Beowulf*, are cogent arguments as to Germanic poetic diction. Certainly the collection of this material is the result of prodigious, determined industry. It took Krogmann seven years to put this together.

Space does not allow and principle does not recommend further detailed account of the interpretations presented in this study. Interested people have to read it. For the passer-by it may be noted that *sunsfatarungo* is resolved into *sunsfader sundrungo* and that *staimbort chbudun* turns out to be *staimabord bludon* "the loud battle swords."

The missing end of the poem is reconstructed to mean: "the father against his will did of life his only heir bereave." Krogmann holds that this is all that was omitted by the OHG translator and that it was omitted by this Christian writer probably "weil er sich sträubte, den Sohn vom Vater erschlagen zu lassen" (105).

On pages 46-49 Krogmann prints on facing pages the text as the OHG Ms. preserves it, although his line arrangement is different from that of Braune or Steinmeyer, and the Langobardic text of the poem as he reconstructs it. For good measure, reduced size photographs of the OHG Ms. are printed after p. 44. He notes that the first sheet of this Ms. is still missing, whereas the Codex and the second sheet were returned to the German government by our State Department in 1954.

With the permission of the publishers and of Professor Krogmann, I append my English version of the Langobardic reconstruction.

### Hildebrandslied

*Kritischer Text von Willy Krogmann*

*English by R-M. S. Heffner*

I found out upon asking, that champions met alone,  
Hildebrand and Hadubrand in the campaign of armies,  
Son and father divided, they made ready their battle gear,

- Prepared their battle clothes, girded themselves with swords,  
5 Heroes over the byrnie, when they rode to the fight.

- Hildebrand began, he was the older warrior,  
In life the wiser, to question he began  
With few words, who his father might be  
Of the men in the army. Of what family are you?  
10 If you name one, I shall know the others,  
The families of the realm. I know the great nation.

- Trusted earls told me in sooth,  
Old and very wise, long ago.  
I am of Hildebrand's family, I am Hadubrand.  
15 Long ago my father went away. Fled from the enmity of Odoacer,  
Away from home along with Dietrich and the band of thanes.  
He left dwelling in the land the little  
Ungrown son of the wife in the bower.  
Without his heir he rode away to the east.  
20 Later on Dietrich experienced the lack of followers,  
The lack of my father far away. He, Dietrich, became a man  
without friends.  
In days gone by he was boundlessly hostile to Odoacer,  
He the most valiant of thanes, Dietrich's companion;  
At the apex of the host he was ready for the fight,  
25 Well-known was the man to men of experience.  
I no longer believe that he lives.

- May Odin in the hall of dead heroes know:  
Never with so closely related a man did you bring about a fight.  
He wound then on his spear a braided bracteate ring (?),  
30 Made of an imperial coin, such as the king made for the hero,  
The King of the Huns gave this favor.  
Strip off the gift with the spear, spear-point against spear-point.

- You are, oh venerable Hun, in your own esteem, very clever.  
You entice me with your words, you mean to attack me with  
your spear.  
35 You are as old as you are, as you have plotted treachery.  
Seafarers have told me in sooth,  
Westward across the Adriatic, battle took him off,  
Cut down Hildebrand, son of Haribrand.  
Most happily I recognize in such battle gear as you wear,  
40 You have at home a liberal lord,  
With the commander of the host you are no exile.

- Woe, alas truly, Oh Wodan, I see my fate.  
Sixty summers under the sky did pass,  
When the king assigned me to the troop of warriors.  
45 As the occasion of battle did not bring me death,

Now my own son shall slay me with his sword,  
 Cut me down with his blade, or else I become his bane.  
 But you will have it easy, if you have courage,  
 To take away the battle garb of so old a warrior,  
 50 To seize the booty, if you are in the right.  
 I should now be the basest of the eastern army,  
 If now I refused you the battle in which you so well rejoice,  
 The common combat. Let him that must now strike,  
 Let him today enjoy the battle gear with triumph,  
 55 Let him possess both gleaming byrnies.

At first boldly the spears flew.  
 The sharp edges they withstood with shields.  
 They swung violently the loud battle swords.  
 They hewed angrily the white shields.  
 60 At last their shields became small,  
 Fought to pieces with swords: against his will the father  
 His only heir did of life bereave.

University of Wisconsin.

R-M. S. Heffner

#### Nachleben des Antiken Geistes im Abendland bis zum Beginn des Humanismus.

Von Richard Newald. Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1960. 454 Seiten.  
 DM 28.00.

Professor Newalds hinterlassenes Werk über die Geistesgeschichte des mittelalterlichen Jahrtausends bildet den Abschluß einer großen wissenschaftlichen Lebensarbeit. Das Buch entwirft ein weitgespanntes Bild des *einen* zentralen Themas dieser Periode, der Auseinandersetzung des christlichen Abendlandes mit dem griechisch-römischen Erbe von der Übergangszeit der Spätantike bei Augustinus und Boethius bis zur Vorbereitung und zum Aufstieg von Humanismus und Renaissance bei Petrarca, Boccaccio und L. B. Alberti. In mancher Hinsicht ein Gegenstück und eine Ergänzung zu E. R. Curtius' *Europ. Literatur u. Lat. Mittelalter*, behandelt das Werk, mit eingehender Analyse von vielen Einzelercheinungen, das Auf und Ab dieses komplizierten Vorgangs in seinen verschiedenen Stufen der Vorbereitung und der Erfüllung in Albertus Magnus und Thomas Aquinas, in Dante und den Meistern der Kathedralkulturen der Isle de France. In einer stark geisteswissenschaftlich orientierten Untersuchung ist es natürlich, daß großes Gewicht auf die philosophisch-theologische Seite der Ein- oder Ausgliederung des antiken Gedankenguts gelegt wird. Zwischen den Extremen des im wesentlichen von asketischen Reformbewegungen getragenen Widerstands gegen die Weltoffenheit der antik-heidnischen Tradition und des bewußten Festhaltens an der Einheit des Kulturerbes christlichen wie paganen Ursprungs erscheinen zahlreiche Zwischenstufen. Auch das Ringen der aristotelischen Dialektik und Ethik mit der platonisch-neuplatonischen Metaphysik und Naturphilosophie zeigt bei jedem der von Newald herangezogenen repräsentativen Denker seine eigene Note mit dem Sich-gegenseitig-Befruchten beider Ströme bei den Größten

des Hochmittelalters, wie es noch in der Mittelgruppe von Raffaels *Schule von Athen* nachklingt. Hinter der abendländischen Gemeinsamkeit der lateinischen Sprache und Kultur tritt doch auch schon die besondere Art des sich allmählich entwickelnden Denkstils der nationalen Kulturen hervor, etwa der französischen, englischen und deutschen; und hinter dem lateinischen Namen vieler der von Newald genannten maßgebenden Denker verbirgt sich deutsche Herkunft. Der Verfasser verfolgt auch die so wichtige Vermittlung griechischen Gedankenguts durch die arabischen und jüdischen Gelehrten sowie auch die in der Hochscholastik nachwirkenden direkten Kontakte mit der byzantinischen Welt. Unter den von Newald herangezogenen Einzelmotiven spielt begreiflicherweise das Sinnbild der *Roma Aeterna* mit seiner herrlichen dichterischen Gestaltung bei Hildebert de Laverdin eine Rolle (die sonst guten Literaturangaben hätten hier auf das einschlägige Kapitel in W. Rehms *Rom in d. europ. Dichtung* verweisen können). Für den Literaturhistoriker ist die Behandlung des Verhältnisses zwischen der lateinischen Hochsprache und der *vulgaris eloquentia* im romanischen wie im germanischen Sprachgebiet von Bedeutung, sowie die Erörterung der Fortbildung der rhetorischen und ästhetischen Theorien. Es finden sich manche feine Beobachtungen über den Anteil antiker Formen und Motive an den Hauptwerken der ritterlichen Dichtung und der Vagantenpoesie. Fast alle großen Namen begegnen. Obwohl die unendliche Stofffülle Beschränkungen auferlegte, hätte Chaucer bei seiner eigenartigen Verwendung antiken Überlieferungsguts mehr als einen kurzen Hinweis verdient. Der allmähliche Wandel des Bildes der Antike im Spätmittelalter wird an bezeichnenden Beispielen gezeigt, Spiegel einer neubetonten Wirklichkeitsnähe und einer Gewichtsverlegung von Autorität und überpersönlicher Traditionsgebundenheit zu persönlicher Erfahrung und Fragestellung. Mit dem großen Reichtum seines aus vielen Quellen geschöpften Materials und mit seinen vielen Längs- und Querverbindungen ist dieser Gesamtüberblick von Wert für jeden, der als Dozent oder Student sich mit dem Schrifttum des deutschen Mittelalters zu fassen hat, da er hilft die Besonderheit der deutschen Entwicklung auf dem Hintergrund der fruchtbaren Spannung zwischen dem griechisch-römischen und dem christlichen Erbe in der ganzen abendländischen Welt zu erfassen.

Kansas Wesleyan University.

—Felix W. Wassermann

Albert Steffen. *Die Dichtung als Schöne Wissenschaft.*

Von Friedrich Hiebel. Bern und München: Francke Verlag, 1960. 280 S. S. Fr. 15.80.

This book is the first full appraisal of Steffen's output, by a scholar of rank who already has several books to his credit.

The subtitle shows the place Hiebel assigns to Steffen's work. He sees in it a renaissance and transformation of the *Schöne Wissenschaft*, initiated by Herder and Lessing as a bridge between science and creative imagination, and practically paralyzed in our century by exaggerated intellectualism and by the current emphasis on the natural sciences. Hiebel is further qualified for his task by the fact that he has the same background as Albert Steffen, that is, the philosophy of Dr. Rudolf

Steiner. An inkling of this background is necessary for the understanding of Steffen's work and of Hiebel's book.

The central concern of this *Weltanschauung* is the factor of consciousness. Generally, we are conscious of the world of the senses, that is, the material world. But the world of the spirit, underlying our everyday scene, can be experienced in full consciousness, and with the detachment of science as well as with personal warmth, according to Dr. Steiner's teaching, which is known as Anthroposophy. In his works, he not only gives his own findings, but also shows the way in which every person may go on to experiences of his own. Such training has been known to the East, but here we have it adapted to the needs of Western man and with a Christian orientation.

Hiebel gives a detailed account of the astonishingly diversified output of his author. Now 75 years old, Steffen has produced so far 67 published works, novels, lyrics, essays, dramas.

Steffen's place is that of an initiator of a new trend, with regard to both content and form. He is very conscious of form; the sounds of language, the vowels and consonants, have a special meaning, in accordance with the indications of Dr. Steiner. Generally, Hiebel knows that his author is an initiator, a breaker of new ground, and as such necessarily not perfect. But in a very few instances we find ourselves wishing that he might refrain from belittling other poets in favor of his subject. Albert Steffen himself knows his place. He writes (p. 269) ". . . when the wing of genius touches me, I no longer desire to give the time allotted to me to the creation of frames and fillers. So I am content to give abbreviations of destiny, and to relinquish the places I leave blank to the reader's imagination. The most important things happen in the gaps and pauses which escape the everyday consciousness, in the dream-happenings of the night. My wish is to bring light into these darker fields of life which, seen from the point of view of the spirit, are more eventful than those experienced in waking." [Translated by the reviewer.]

These are the words of a poet appearing in the novel *Oase der Menschlichkeit*, and according to Hiebel, they are Steffen's own confession. What might appear as a weakness in the author's style can now be better judged: a tendency to leave out psychological links. Hiebel is further helpful by stating that one cannot hope to get the full benefit of Steffen's books if one does not read and reread them.

Hiebel gives a lively and revealing account of Steffen's lyrics (nine volumes with some 650 poems), and shows how the latter is breaking ground in his novels and essays. The dramas are given very careful and full consideration, as it is here that the poet may be most effective. The range of subjects is imposing: murder and its consequences; euthanasia; suicide; drug addiction; mongolism; the Anti-Christ; a new mystery-culture; death and resurrection; reincarnation. He does not repeat himself, and his style each time is adapted to the subject. Most of the 17 dramas have been performed, many on Swiss stages, the majority in Dornach near Basel, at the Goetheanum. Hiebel feels that the latest drama, *Lin*, with a Chinese setting, will not be the last. The problem

of evil underlies all of them, and they are centered in a non-sectarian Christianity.

About Albert Steffen Fritz Strich of the University of Bern said on the occasion of the poet's seventieth birthday: "Spirit in Steffen's sense is not intellectual and not abstract. It is the perceiving faculty which, free from the shackles of matter, is able to see that Kingdom which was man's original home. . . . The spirit recognizes . . . that one life between birth and death is not sufficient to bring about transformation. It can only be accomplished by ever renewed lives on earth. This is the anthroposophical image of man: the life of man is not enclosed between birth and death; . . . it is . . . repetition which is not similarity, but transformation . . . [So] it happens that the *Schöne Wissenschaft* is born, which is not merely aesthetics and poetics, but spiritual poetry itself is *Schöne Wissenschaft*. The boundaries between art and science, between beauty and truth, are rendered non-existent in spiritual poetry at this summit." [Translated by the reviewer.]

Hiebel sees in these words the quintessence of Steffen's poetic intentions.

In his beautifully written study Hiebel offers us an excellent guide through the work of an unusual poet of great significance. Steffen's work may now be accessible to a larger audience than before.

Vassar College.

—Ruth Hofrichter

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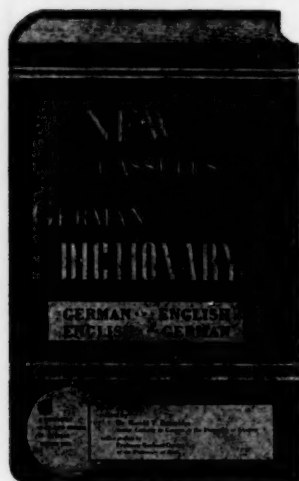
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